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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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59th year of publication

Rwanda: preventing future genocides

James N. Birkitt, Jr.

LOS ANGELES (NCC) – A commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, held in Los Angeles April 23 and sponsored by the National Council of Churches USA, recalled the horror of the genocide and offered a word of counsel and hope – genocide can be prevented.

Keynote speaker was Samantha Power, recipient of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for her book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, which focuses on the failure of America, other Western governments and the United Nations to respond effectively to genocide.

Power called on United States to redefine its "vital interests" to include genocide. Currently, long-standing American policy permits military intervention only when America's security or economic well-being is threatened.

Another positive step, she said, "would be for the U.S. to replace its all-or-nothing diplomatic approach with a continuum of responses and options that may stop genocide before it occurs. The failure of the U.S. government to act is always an implicit signal to other governments as well as a green light to the perpetrators of genocide."

Power noted that such actions would be necessary to prevent a repetition of this horror in Sudan. She pointed out that even the slightest condemnation by the U.S. Government of policies of the government in Khartoum results in the easing up of hostilities.

An eclectic gathering of religious leaders, educators, public policy experts, students and activists attended the event, titled "Remembering Rwanda: Ten Years After The Genocide." Held at the Fowler Museum in Los Angeles, the April 23 event featured presentations by genocide experts, testimonies by survivors, and the premiere showing of a documentary film on the Rwandan Genocide.

Kofi Annan at gravesite during ceremonies commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

Missteps and mixed signals

The 1994 Rwandan Genocide, the result of escalating violence between Hutu and Tutsi peoples, began in April 1994 and led to the murder of more than 800,000 Tutsis and politically moderate Hutu during 100 days of terror. Power's research on the world's failure to intervene in Rwanda notes that the response of the United States and other Western countries is shaped by decisions made prior to the start of genocide, rather than in response to it. She also noted that a series of missteps and mixed signals by the United States and the United Nations emboldened the perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide.

In her remarks, Power highlighted ways future genocides might be prevented. In addition to calling on the U.S. government to expand its definition of "vital interests" to include prevention and intervention in genocide, Power called on journalists to focus world attention on genocide, encouraged faith communities to raise their voices, and suggested governments note "the early warning signals that are always part of the cycle of genocide, including smaller massacres that serve as trial balloons to test international response and the demonizing of specific groups by the government or the media."

Power also called on governments to find new ways to conduct diplomacy. "Diplomats are so conditioned to be diplomats that they consistently offer conventional responses in the face of unconventional horrors. Governments must replace the pantomime of response with robust, effective responses."

God sleeps in Rwanda

The NCC event included the premiere of *God Sleeps In Rwanda*, a documentary by filmmakers Kimberlee Acquaro and Stacy Sherman. The film highlights ways genocide decimated Rwandan

Continued on page 2...

Ten years later, South Africa and its churches face challenges

Chris Herlinger

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (ENI) – When South Africa celebrated its10th anniversary of democratic rule on April 27, it did so in a spirit of triumph.

Once one of the world's most bitterly divided countries, it narrowly avoided civil war, dismantled the officially-sanctioned racist policy of apartheid, it launched a non-racial democracy and now lays claim to Africa's most robust economy.

"Fortunately, we survived," said Cynthia Mose, an elementary school principal in one of Cape Town's black townships. "We are trying to build a nation, reconcile, patch whatever was wrong."

Alienation, disillusionment

But the anniversary will also provide a moment for sober reflection, and even South Africa's most committed supporters acknowledge the country still faces considerable challenges.

"South Africa finds itself at a

See **South Africa** *page 3...*

Durban, South Africa is a thriving modern city.

News

Rwanda

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families, destabilized the culture, and contributed to the dramatic increase of HIV and AIDS among Rwandan women and children.

During his remarks, Rev. Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, noted, "It is important that we remember what we failed to do, and that includes churches and church people. We must ask forgiveness for our silence. Those of us in faith communities must honor God's call to love and care for the least of our brothers and sisters."

The Armenian genocide

Dr. Richard Hrair Dekmejian, an expert on the Armenian Genocide and professor of political science at the University of Southern California, noted that despite the current international focus on terrorism, "Terrorists have killed relatively few people when compared with genocide."

Dekmejian, noting the NCC program was being held on the eve of the 89th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, called for a three-point commitment by faith communities and people of conscience to "bring the perpetrators of genocide to justice, work for compensation for its victims, and influence governments to prevent and intervene in future genocides."

International bystanders

Gerry Caplan, founder of the international coalition Remembering Rwanda, suggested four groups who must be remembered one decade after the Rwandan Genocide: "those who died; the victims who survived; the perpetrators, most of whom were never brought to justice; and the international community, or more accurately, international bystanders, who actively chose not to get involved."

Caplan laid broad blame for the failure to intervene in the Rwandan Genocide on parties including churches within Rwanda, the governments of the United States and Europe and the United Nations.

Two Rwandan Genocide survivors vividly described the destruction of entire villages and towns, the use of rape as a tool of genocide, the mass psychosis of genocide, and the lasting impact on survivors. In a powerful and moving moment, one survivor said, "I recently looked through my photo albums of my friends and family from Rwanda – and realized that everyone in those photos is dead. Except for me. I am called to bear witness."

The "Remembering Rwanda: Ten Years After The Genocide" commemorative event was held as part of the World Council of Churches' Decade To Overcome Violence.

Reflecting after the event, Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, the NCC's Associate General Secretary for International Affairs and Peace, commented that "What was quite compelling was Samantha Power's assessment that the lessons of Rwanda could be applied today to prevent another tragedy in Sudan. If we have learned anything as an international community from our various commemorations of the Rwandan Genocide, it is that we must apply these lessons to situations that come before us. Otherwise, we will be resigned to saying yet another time, 'Never again!'"

Christian denominations acknowledge inaction on Rwanda genocide

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi April (ENI) – Political leaders and representatives of Christian denominations have acknowledged their past inaction and urged strong support for a healing process in Rwanda, that had suffered the trauma of a genocide in which up to one million people were killed over 100 days in 1994.

Churches said in a document entitled, "The Kigali Covenant", produced at a workshop in the Rwandan capital from 16 to 19 April, they would "stand up and speak against behavior, pronouncements and practices that have the tendency to set one group of people against another." The covenant was read out at a Sunday service in the Kigali Stadium to mark the 10th anniversary of the massacres.

Leaders from 20 African countries attended the workshop, convened by the Protestant Council of Rwanda and the Alliance of Evangelical Churches in Rwanda, together with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The guilt of inaction

Before leaving for Rwanda from Kenya, where he had visited from April 8-15, the Rev. Sam Kobia, general secretary of the WCC, the world's largest grouping of Christian denominations, said that churches accepted the guilt of inaction.

"The message we are taking to Rwanda is that we as churches know we could have done more to prevent the genocide," he told Ecumenical News International. "We could have spoken much earlier as churches."

Separately, the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Rev. Ishmael Noko, appealed for an end to the silence and inaction that permitted genocide and social cleansing to take place in any part of the world.

"Silence and inaction on the part of the international community as a whole, allowed the genocide in Rwanda to occur," Noko said in a letter sent to Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Noko noted that the Rwanda killings a decade ago continued to be a powerful indictment against a global community that "after the Second World War, had sworn genocide would never be allowed to occur again."

The LWF general secretary said it was particularly painful to reflect on the role played by religious leaders in fomenting and carrying out the killings. The genocide, he said, "should be a permanent challenge to the complacency of religious leaders in all regions of the world."

At the Ntarama Memorial (formerly a Roman Catholic chapel) and the Kigali Memorial Centre, the church leaders saw human bones and skulls displayed. On April 7, marked as the 10th anniversary of the start of the massacres, survivors of the genocide buried the remains of hundreds of victims recovered from pit latrines and mass graves.

EFC deeply disturbed by passage of bill C-250

For immediate release from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) is deeply disturbed about the possible impact of C-250 on religious freedom in Canada. Bill C-250, a private members bill that includes "sexual orientation" in groups protected against the spread of hate propaganda in the Criminal Code. This Senate passed this bill despite an outpouring of concern from thousands of Canadians.

Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham, director of Law and Public Policy of the EFC, says, "This legislation comes at a time when issues of sexual morality and marriage are at the forefront of public debate. Without a clear definition of what is criminal hatred, it is ambiguous what public statements will be considered criminal."

"While opposing the promotion of hatred against anyone, we are deeply concerned about the chilling effect this legislation may have on the legitimate expression of religious belief," says Bruce Clemenger, president of the EFC. "We as a religious community want to ensure that the purpose of prohibiting hate speech does not criminalize the legitimate expression of religious belief, the resulting views of morality nor religious texts."

Bill C-250 adds "sexual orientation" to the list of "identifiable groups" in section 318 of the Criminal Code. This would add sexual orientation to the prohibited grounds for:

1. "advocating genocide" defined as advocating or promoting genocide which is further defined as killing members of the group or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction.

2. "public incitement of hatred" which is defined as communicating statements in a public place that incite hatred. Note that a "public place" is defined as "any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, expressed or implied."

3. "willful promotion of hatred" which is defined as communicating statements other than in private conversation that wilfully promote hatred against any identifiable group.

There are several defences, including good faith opinion on a religious subject. However, these defences are limited to number 3 above.

"The Supreme Court of Canada has limited the use of the defences so that it is not clear that they will adequately protect religious expression about sexual morality," says Buckingham.

Christians are concerned that if an individual uses passages from the Bible in a manner that could be considered incitement of hatred, as was decided in the Owens case under the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, portions of the Bible could be considered hate propaganda as well.

"Christians have seen their rights to dissent restricted by case after case in the courts," says Buckingham. "We no longer trust that the guarantee of religious freedom in the Charter is necessarily going to apply to protect religious free speech."

Politics

South Africa

...continued from page 1

critical juncture, a time both of great opportunity and a great number of missed opportunities," the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, a Cape Town-based organization with church ties, said in anticipation of the 10th anniversary.

Despite progress, including the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which met from 1996-98 and was headed by Anglican archbishop and Nobel Laureate, Desmond Tutu, the Cape Town institute said "talk of the 'South African miracle' often masks the level of resentment, alienation and disillusionment with which people view the political transition."

The resentment is visible not only by bitter conservative whites who stubbornly cling to memories of an era black South Africans would rather forget. Alienation, some of it subtle but still discernible, is often expressed by blacks, such as the cool, thinly-veiled resentment of a tour guide showing a group of visitors the prison on Robben Island. There, former president Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) served years of imprisonment.

"Some are in the government; I am still here," the guide, a former prisoner and himself an ANC member, said recently.

Resentments

The remark was not a swipe at Mandela, who remains a revered and almost untouchable figure of adulation. Rather, it seemed directed at key ANC leaders – such as Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki – who spent years in exile while much of the hard political work in the country was carried out, often at great personal risk, by now-forgotten activists.

The remark also points to economic resentments: while the ANC-led government can point with pride to housing and public service improvements in black townships and the growth of an expanding black-middle class, a third of people in South Africa are jobless. Economic disparities between blacks and whites also remain considerable.

And, tellingly, in a country which is now touting itself as a burgeoning high-tech paradise, positions go unfilled because thousands of young people do not have adequate job experience or educational backgrounds. In a 2002 survey of Cape Town residents, Wired News reported recently, two-thirds of respondents said they had never used a computer; barely one in 10 had any access to the Internet.

"The primary challenges remain economic," said Donald Shriver, former president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. Shriver, a scholar who studies the politics and theology of forgiveness and reconciliation, recently participated in a conference at Robben Island on historical memory and healing in South Africa.

The church searching for a role

Like other people who have visited South Africa before and after the end of apartheid, Shriver said the changes under way should not be minimized.

"It's a lot better country than it was in 1986," the year he first visited South Africa, Shriver told Ecumenical News International, crediting Mandela "a secular saint" and Tutu "a religious saint" for a transition that avoided major bloodshed.

But Shriver, like others with religious ties to South Africa, sounded a note of regret that one of the key players in the struggle against apartheid – the church – is searching for a role in a changed environment.

"If you are criticizing the 'sins of power', what in contemporary South Africa constitutes sin? That's an open question, and church leaders and theologians are struggling with that," Shriver said.

Church leaders who once denounced apartheid now feel sidelined, and are having to address a new and truculent set of problems and concerns, whether they be an horrific AIDS epidemic or the mounting political crisis in neighboring Zimbabwe. That has sometimes pitted them against the South Africa government – a new, and often uncomfortable, role.

"The challenge is to engage with the government critically but not act as if the solidarity we share with them is lost," said Joseph Mdhlela, an editor and spokesman for the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the country's biggest ecumenical organization and which had a prominent role during the years of struggle against apartheid.

Sometimes the benefit to society at large has been the churches' loss: a number of prominent black theologians are now serving in government, as is Frank Chikane, the former SACC general secretary, who is Mbeki's chief of staff.

One result? "The church," said Charles Villa-Vicencio, the director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, "has lost many of its prophets."

Chris Herlinger, ENI's US correspondent, recently visited South Africa.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Byzantium, the west and constitutional government

A few years back I came across a fascinating article by one Angeliki Laiou, "Byzantium and the West," in which she told the tale of two fictional persons, Hugh and Paolo, a Frenchman and Venetian respectively, visiting Constantinople near the end of the twelfth century. She ably describes something of the political culture shock these two typical late mediaeval westerners would have experienced in traveling to what was then the greatest city of Christendom. Constantinople, recall, had been founded nearly a millennium earlier by the Emperor Constantine in AD 330 as the new capital city for the Roman Empire.

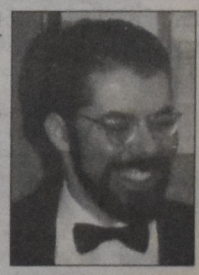
In journeying through the Byzantine-controlled Balkans, the two adventurers would be fairly safe from the predations of bandits, which they certainly could not take for granted at home. Furthermore, they would find representatives of the central imperial government functioning in this capacity throughout the territory. They would be surprised to find weights and measures standardized across its expanse, along with a single currency facilitating domestic commerce and international trade. Nor would they find the landscape dotted with castles – private fortresses in which the nobility could assert their own power against the central government. Byzantine nobles were more evidently in the service of imperial authority and functioned more as administrators than as minor potentates in their own right. A single legal system, based on Justinian's Code, held sway throughout the Empire.

Conditions in western Europe could not have been more different. Although there was, for example, a king of France, his actual political authority did not extend beyond his own dominions surrounding Paris. The remainder of France was controlled by various rulers, some of whom owed only nominal allegiance to the king. Inhabitants of these disparate lands hardly thought of themselves as Frenchmen at all; they owed their allegiance to whoever owned the land they were working and undertook to protect them. Laws differed from one place to the next, as did currencies, weights and measures. Even the clergy could be seen to be in the service of a foreign ruler, namely, the pope.

In some respects, the Byzantine Empire, like the double-headed eagle that symbolized it, looked both backward and forward. It was a vestige of a Roman imperium that once kept the peace throughout the Mediterranean basin, yet it also anticipated something of the modern state that would arise in the west some four centuries later. If, as Herman Dooyeweerd believes, the state is defined as the community created by the government's monopoly of coercive swordpower over a given territory, then Byzantium exemplified this better than the fragmented feudal kingdoms of the west.

However, lest we wax too enthusiastic over the Byzantine political model, we should recall that it was in the west, where nobility and clergy possessed their own power bases distinct from the monarchy, that constitutional and representative government arose. Parliamentary government in England emerged out of the king's need for more revenues than he could raise from rents in his own lands. This forced him, hat in hand, to approach the nobility (the Lords) and untitled landholders (the Commons), who were thereby empowered at his expense.

By contrast, the post-Byzantine east has had a more difficult time transcending the ancient political culture of monarchical absolutism which has effectively retarded the growth of democracy. Thus while uniformity in the administration of justice in the Byzantine Empire was definitely advantageous compared to western feudal fragmentation, the balance of competing estates in the west was over the long term more conducive to the develop-ment of constitutional government.



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Editorial

From the atonement to the mystical union

Harry der Nederlanden

In recent issues of CC, inspired by Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ*, we've focused on the fact that Jesus hung on the cross as our substitute, in our place. He was able to take our place, Scripture tells us, because he took on our flesh, uniting our humanity with divinity in his person. In him God and man are one and therefore he can serve to bring atonement or at-one-ment.

It is this, the incarnation, that makes it possible for Jesus, a Jew born 2000 years ago, to serve as our representative before God, as the second Adam, to live a life of perfect obedience that is credited to us and to die in our place. Whether we see the atonement in terms of Christ winning the victory over death and the powers of darkness or as bearing God's wrath on sin, he is able to do this because he is first of all able to be our stand-in, our substitute.

In our individualistic age, the idea that one person can do things in the place of another raises all sorts of resistance. Each person must be seen as unique and responsible for his own actions. The notion that we are all involved in Adam's primal sin and that the break that occurred way back there in a time before time was somehow healed 2000 years ago in out-of-the-way Palestine by the death of a wandering preacher boggles the modern mind.

We work with more tangible causal connections when we tell stories and offer explanations. The biblical story of atonement removes us from centre stage. We are no longer in the role of actor, of determining our own destiny. We are pushed into the wings, into the shadows. The heart of the cosmic drama, it seems, is played out over our heads. We cannot begin to grasp what happened on the cross when the sky darkened, the earth shook, the curtain in the temple tore from top to bottom and Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"

That cry, almost an accusation, tore the heavens open, it echoed backward and forward through history like a hurricane leveling fences between periods and cultures, and it rippled across continents and oceans in waves that altered the topography and the very horizons of our world. We now live in a Jesus world – Jesus over us, God upholding us and the Spirit within.

Too many of the Bible scholars and theologians that seek to make Jesus more accessible and understandable to us (see page 10), do so by taking back centre stage from him. Whatever Jesus did, whether it was an act of courage, revolution, love, or deep insight, is something we have to replicate. Any transaction that happens without us and that renders us passive has to be rooted out so that we moderns aren't left looking silly, with our hands dangling limp and naked like dead chickens. There's something very wrong with a religion that leaves us looking like fools, so the scholars make a few revisions and reinterpret a text here and there so we can stand before God and the world as folks with a properly democratic religion.

What I understand of the big brouhaha in the Netherlands a few decades ago about the atonement centred around this very issue. To leave it all up there in the sky, in some kind of heavenly law-court, may have been alright for our forefathers, who were stuck with kings and queens, but nowadays we have to put it back in the hands of the people. Existentialist decisionism, revolutionary activism and do-it-yourself spirituality are the result.

But the concerns behind these theological shenanigans are not groundless. Jesus did come to bring salvation to all the peoples of the world. And salvation encompasses a host of things. The attempt to describe it sends the Bible writers scrambling for metaphors – enlightenment, liberation, new life, healing, purification, cosmic redemption, a drink of water, etc. All have to do with an intensification and enhancement of our humanity. Even metaphors that represent the life of faith as folly, submission, martyrdom and servanthood have the effect of activating us and enlisting us in the ministry of Christ.

Substitution and representation, thus, work in two directions. Jesus takes our place before the throne of God and there does things we cannot do, and because he has done that, he lives in us, his people gathered from all nations into his body, and he becomes the central force in human history. The church of Christ has never ever lived under the delusion that after the atonement has been accomplished, we can go it on our own. It is the atonement, unity with God in Christ, that propels the church and the children of God forward into history and into the world blowing their christic bugles to bring down the walls of Jericho and Jerusalem and Athens and Rome and Paris and Amsterdam and London and Washington and Nairobi and New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro. We are able to do all things *in Christ* who strengthens us. That phrase "in Christ" percolates throughout the preaching of Paul. He never sees believers, whether individually and in concert, acting by themselves; he always sees them as the expression of the risen Savior who animates his church by his Spirit like the wind fills a sail.

We are reconciled with God through the death of his Son and made at-one, but that at-one-ment does not stop. His life and power continue to flow into us. Just as we are united with him in his death on the cross, says Paul, so we are united with him in life. As he represented us before the Father, so we represent him here on earth. However, his presence is not only in us and through us; it also goes out before us. His presence encompasses us all around, for he is the cosmic Christ through whom and in whom all things hang together and have their being.

Recently I read a science article that claims that many thousands of years ago as the great glaciers were shrinking in the Great Lakes area, behind the retreating glaciers a huge fresh-water lake formed that covered most of Ontario and Manitoba. To the north, what is now Hudson's Bay extended much farther southward than it does now. Gradually the glacier that separated them and acted as a dam between them grew thinner until one day the dam burst. A vast ocean of fresh, icy water gushed into the Atlantic, cooling it and altering the climate of the whole earth.

That's what the atonement did: it broke down the dam and the entire climate of the world changed. It became springtime. We are now living in the springtime, "in time of daffodils (who know the goal of living is to grow), in time of lilacs who proclaim the aim of waking is to dream, in time of roses (who amaze our now and here with paradise), yes in time of all sweet things beyond whatever mind may comprehend" (E.E. Cummings).

Our Calvinist forebears used to speak of this continuity between Christ's work and ours as "the office of all believers." Just as Christ concentrated in himself the three offices separately exercised in the Old Testament of prophet, priest and king, so we too serve as prophets, priests and kings in this world in whatever we do. When Christians act in Christ's name in the world, an economy is activated in which there is a constant exchange between the risen and triumphant Lord and his people here on earth.

Calvin spoke of a "mystical union," but he did not understand this as a purely personal, inner thing. He saw this as a historical, political and cosmic relationship. When we are by faith grafted into the body of Christ, we are not just joining an organization but we are becoming one flesh with him who has laid down his life as a seed so that life may spring forth and bloom, and all things be made new.

And those whose eyes are opened by faith will sing with the saints:

"Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the ages.
Who will not fear you, O Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

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Letters

A nightmarish experience but also renewed inspiration

With great interest I read Pastor Peter Slofstra's letter "How Redemptive is Gibson's Passion?" March 15/04.

Our 16-year-old grandson came to me and said, "Grandma you and Grandpa should go see *The Passion of the Christ* film. It will make you think."

We did go. And think we did!

We came out of the experience with a somewhat different interpretation than Peter Slofstra.

The film directly confronted me with the heavy price Christ paid for my salvation. What's so bad about that?

Like Slofstra, I too found it a nightmarish experience. Humanly speaking, after such cruel heavy floggings not a soul on earth could carry such heavy cross up a hill long enough to be crucified on it.

History records many persons convicted to be crucified died along the way due to the cruel punishment they'd received on route to the cross.

But this was no ordinary case. God's immeasurably great love and divine purpose demand that his Son face the heavy task of such deep and cruel sufferings to pay for our sins.

My life will be stamped by watching *The Passion of The Christ*. Partaking in the Lords Supper at church on Good Friday was a much more emotional experience than ever before.

Jesus's dying on the cross represents far more than the physical sufferings.

Slofstra's remark, "The Christ I follow dealt with the horror on the cross so I would not have to," leaves me wondering if not many of us conveniently wash away the edge of suffering by minimizing in our own mind the heavy and bloody price that Jesus paid for our salvation?

Without doubt, the ruthless shaking out of complacency by the powerful and graphic images in Mel Gibson's film, does rekindle many questions and debates about the person and the message of Jesus Christ the Savior all over the world.

I believe that the Lord himself has opened up this new door for the many who have not yet uncovered the real truth who Jesus actually is. Gibson's contribution in this film creates renewed inspiration to dig a little deeper for the Truth.

I do advise everyone to go see this film not only to criticize but to try understand just how much it took for us to be able to receive eternal salvation that is free for the taking.

At 16 years of age my grandson already understood much of the same.

Grandson, thank you for inviting us to such eye-opening rich experience. God bless you.

Love,
Gertie Pool.
Abbotsford, BC.

Is that a Fatwah I hear?

My old friend Gerald Vandezande reminded me of a birthday card I received recently from some very dear friends. The card shows a black and white picture of some elderly, doddering, black-clad, white bearded, top and bowler hatted men engaging in fisticuffs, presumably in the "hands-on" stage of a heated argument. The caption reads: "Growing old, it's not nice, but it's interesting."

Brother Gerald is quoted in the April 26 issue of CC as calling down curses on those who are not quite on board on the matter of "civil" unions for homosexual and lesbian couples. Matthew 23:23, no less: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!...etc., etc."

Well, that's me, I guess.

I've already had a few minor woes over time, so I'll just soldier on.

I don't think that normalizing the abnormal is the way to go, but I was not aware that I would be excommunicated for holding that view. Does this approach not sound a bit like a fatwah declared by one of those wonderful ayatollahs?

More troubling, however, is the tolerance for unbiblical life styles coupled with intolerance for Christians who beg to differ. Let me see now: where did I notice this before?

This is not what the several backers of the "civil" union approach have in mind, I'm sure.

But selling this to the Christian community on the basis of Matthew 23:23 is not the way to go.

My problem concerns what appear to be two pillars of the "civil" union proposal. These pillars are for the government "to promote justice among and for all its citizens" and "to protect the vulnerable."

What, pray tell, is the justice and protection for the most vulnerable, i.e. babies and infants, to be placed in adoptive "civil" union homes?

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen's more convincing starting point on this matter seems to lead to a better solution. Richard Mouw also puts the finger on some gaping holes in the discussions, as do Richard Benne and Gerald McDermott in Christianity Today online.

While I'm behind my (not-so-trusty) computer anyway: please mark my vote in favour of the model letter to the PM proposed by Dr. John Bolt. Thank you for putting this on the record.

As well, thank you, Mr. Editor, for your thoughtful editorial in the same issue. Let us continue to pray for God to curb Satan as he goes around like a roaring lion. That is not just interesting, it is today's horrible reality.

Hank Kuntz

"I vote for neither"

I read with interest John Bolt's article, "Canada CRC tells Americans to vote for Kerry", and I rushed to the Christian Reformed Church's web site to read the CRC letter.

I was disappointed, upon reading the letter, to find that Professor Bolt may have been a bit vigorous in his characterization of the document. It certainly doesn't overtly tell Americans how to vote, nor does it advocate unilateral nuclear disarmament, as he suggests. It definitely does oppose Canada's participation in the proposed ballistic missile shield, and then makes a rather large leap to tie this desired non-participation to the matter of global poverty.

I am quite uncomfortable with the letter. It seems largely premised on the assertion that a missile shield will not work. I'm not sure that a group of church leaders, no matter how wise, is well qualified to make this determination, and, as I understand it, the people who are qualified don't entirely agree on the subject. But neither is it fair for a representative of the CRC to imply that his denomination supports this particular political position. Some in the CRC do support the missile shield concept, and can quite properly argue that protecting innocent people from horrible weapons is a very legitimate goal.

Professor Bolt writes an alternative letter and challenges CC readers to compare the two. His letter is well-written and I agree with much of it. I run stuck, though, when he suggests that Canada has not taken "a clear and unequivocal stand against terrorism." From the sentences that follow, it appears that he is referring to Canada's decision to refrain from participating in the Iraq war. In this, Mr. Bolt is doing exactly what he accuses the Canadian Council of Churches' letter of: supporting one particular politician's platform. George Bush has long argued that the attack on Iraq is part of the war against terrorism; many Canadians and Americans disagree.

The invasion of Iraq may or may not have been justified to remove an evil dictator, or to search for weapons of mass destruction, or for a host of other reasons. But it's not clear that there is any real connection between al-Qaeda terrorist attacks and Iraq (as opposed to much more obvious connections with U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.) Canada was the first nation to aid the U.S. at the time of the 9/11 attacks; Canadian troops fought in Afghanistan and now are participating in re-building efforts there; Canada has committed many millions to the rebuilding of Iraq. Canada has not been equivocal in its stand against terrorism; it just hasn't entirely signed on to the U.S. version of the war against terrorism.

Professor Bolt's letter loses my support completely when it speaks of Canada's dependence on the "good graces of the American people" and of the United States remaining "so friendly" to such an ungrateful and ungracious Canada. This is precisely the arrogant attitude that causes so much friction between the United States and its friends.

I vote for neither letter. What does all this take us? It shows that the leaders of the CRC – whether Ministries Directors or seminary professors – should take great care in penning or signing letters on behalf of anyone other than themselves. On matters where the church can clearly interpret Scripture, it should speak loudly and prophetically to politicians and the public. On matters less clear – Iraq, missile defence, and various political platforms – church leaders should encourage members to discuss, debate, study Scripture, participate, and speak out.

As Professor Bolt rightly points out, "That is properly considered a matter of Christian liberty; thoughtful Christians... can disagree on political matters without violating the bond of communion."

Ed Bosveld

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Culture

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE

Job Description: not-so-dumb farmer

A farmer was once visited by a district agriculturist with some friendly advice about the latest farm technology. The farmer protested, "I don't need more information. I am already only doing half of what I know."

The farmer's reply may seem ignorant or indolent. It is, however, black humor. Farming has become so complex and demanding that it is almost impossible to stay on top of things.

Our urban society does not appreciate the difficulty of farming. Somehow the occupation is still thought of as beneath the average normal person. Fifty years ago it might have been possible for someone who could not excel at anything else to subsist as a farmer.

Even then, however, that was rarely so. More than a few hired hands on farms were there because they could not "make a go of it" on their own. In the fifties a joke around the campus of an agricultural college was that the principal was there because he was unsuccessful at farming.

Recently my daughter, studying for a Master's degree at a well-known college, had her farm sensitivities violated. Her professor reporting on a recent out-of town lecture mentioned the audience was primarily pig farmers. The class broke out in laughter. Except for my daughter. "Why are they laughing? Why are they laughing?" she blurted out.

Let me try to do what I can to dispel any myths about "dumb farmers" with a partial list of what my son must know or pick up soon now that he has taken over the family farm.

Livestock feeds and feeding:

1. The nutrition provided by a wide variety of feedstuff including the respective protein (including amino acid content), energy, minerals and vitamins contained.
2. How to balance rations.
3. Which soils produce which nutritional deficiencies in plants.
4. How the weather influences both physical and chemical make-up of feed.
5. The respective unique nutritional needs of different species and classes of livestock.
6. Harvesting, handling and processing equipment.
7. How to harvest quality feed in spite of the weather.

Range management:

1. Good fencing technique.
2. Productive pasture forage species suited to the area.
3. Pasture rotation schemes including knowledge of sensitive stages of growth in respective forage species.
4. Fertilizer management.
5. Weed and pest control.

Genetics and breeding:

1. The heritability of desired characteristics.
2. Deleterious traits and how to avoid them.
3. Selection of replacements having the optimum combination of traits.
4. The employment of heterosis.

Behavior:

1. How to move animals, depending on the species.
2. How to manage the "pecking order" in a herd.
3. Design of corrals and other facilities to expedite handling.
4. The selection and use of a horse, a livestock dog and a guard dog.

Health:

1. The diseases possible, their symptoms, prevention and treatment.
2. The same for parasites, internal and external.
3. Various operations for individual and herd health.
4. Nutritional diseases, including detection and remedy.
5. Rules and regulations pertaining to livestock diseases.
6. Birthing difficulties.

Marketing:

1. Market demands.
2. Transportation.
3. Value-added product sales.
4. Provincial, national and international politics.

Crops:

1. Species and varieties.
2. Suitability to the area.
3. Selection of plants that provide feed but also build or maintain soil quality.
4. The availability, suitability and application of pesticides, fertilizers and other crop growth assists.
5. All cropping operations from soil preparation through harvest.
6. Weed and pest control.

Maintenance shop:

1. Some knowledge and ability for the repair of the mechanical, including motors, hydraulics and transmissions.
2. Some ability to weld.
3. Electrical and plumbing knowledge.
4. Many farmers are also capable of fabricating tools or machines.

Construction:

Building with wood, steel and concrete.

General management:

How to survive in a business where:

1. The costs cannot, with few exceptions, be factored into the selling price of the product.
2. The price for the product is dictated by the buyer.
3. Weather is always the wild card.
4. All your neighbors may be your competitors.
5. The government for political reasons may make farmers in other countries your competitors.

The details for the above lists would require a shelf of books. Furthermore, head knowledge is not enough. A farmer must have considerable experience on the job in order to put the big picture together, to develop a sort of sixth sense about things, especially if working with livestock.

Finally, farmers may wish to know who has draft horses for sale, maybe even keep a set of harness in the shop, because with escalating costs of inputs and ever more sophistication in farm machinery a return to farming with horses could become viable.

Vern Gleddie lives on a sheep ranch near Edmonton, AB

Fowl play troubling Mother Goose in Hamilton

Reinder Klein

The local Canadian Goose population, persuaded that spring has finally sprung, is again looking to produce another generation of fowl friends here. For that purpose, Hamilton's Pier 8 has long been a favored nesting spot for the honking big birds.

Clearly in the family-planning mode, an intrepid mother goose has once again built a nest in the slightly elevated brick planter fronting Marine Freight Terminal 8 here. It's a brilliant choice, for the spot is sunny, protected, off the ground and quiet. "Location, location," Mother Goose must have thought!

As everyone knows, mothers are fiercely protective of their offspring, and Hamilton's female fowl are no exception. Hence, when humans unexpectedly arrived the other day and one of them parked a car practically right up against the somewhat elevated nest, our brooding goose failed to be amused.

Frightened by the motorized monster, Mamma Goose initially fled, then boldly parked herself on the pavement right behind the car, as if to say: "Touch my beauties and you'll have to leave over my dead body."

It didn't come to that, fortunately. And there was, in fact, no wild goose chase either. The car got away unscathed. To be sure, the birds did have to leave for a while, the big strapping workmen having been sufficiently pestered – intimidated, really – by the birds' defensive posturing to chase them away... for a while. No sooner had the men left for the day and the geese were back, sitting quietly on the pavement checking things out.

There's even a poetic little twist to the story so far. For the persistent birds did not return alone. As I write this, two sets of geese are strutting around the parking lot.

It's going to be interesting to see who will win this battle of wills. Stay tuned!

Reflection

Here's a Crazy Idea

Walt Brouwer

"Here's a crazy idea: After all our ambitious child-rearing with Discovery toys, Suzuki piano lessons, conflict-avoidance classes, 4 a.m. swim practices, SAT prep classes, driver education and summer flights to study folk music in the Republic of Georgia, we might have done as well (and saved money) by just sending our kids to church."

Youth leading song worship in church service

This crazy idea is what you might expect in a Sunday sermon. Instead, it comes from a report on a recent study done by a major American medical school. For years the Dartmouth Medical School has done research on kids, including brain-imaging studies. Their conclusion is that young people who are religious are better off in significant ways than their secular peers. "They are less likely than nonbelievers to smoke and drink and more likely to eat well; less likely to commit crimes and more likely to wear seat belts; less likely to be depressed and more likely to be satisfied with their families and school."

Brad Wilcox, who is a member of the commission that studied teens, said, "Religion has a unique net effect on adolescents above and beyond factors like race, parental education and family income." So striking are the findings that poor religious children tend to do better than non-religious children from a middle-class background.

Laura Sessions Stepp of the Washington Post wrote the article that reported on the study's findings. She points out that the results of the study were by no means a fore-gone conclusion. In fact, "the commission was no conclave of religious conservatives. It included professors and researchers at the medical schools of Harvard and the University of California at Los Angeles as well as longtime experts on child-rearing."

Hard-wired to connect

The commission members said that churches benefit teenagers by affirming who they are, expecting a lot from them and giving them opportunities to show what they can do. What sets churches apart from other organizations such as clubs, sports teams and other youth organizations – and which makes a surprisingly big difference to kids, according to the panel – is that they promote a "direct personal relationship with the Divine."

Adolescents, said the Dartmouth group, are "hard-wired to connect" to people and God. Panels of academics and medical practitioners don't usually refer to 'the Divine.' But these experts couldn't ignore what the data suggested, in particular two things: religion or spirituality may influence young people's brain circuits, reducing their levels of the stress hormone cortisol, and personal devotion is twice as likely to protect them from risky behavior as it would adults.

"Their brains are changing, their relations with family, friends and the opposite sex are changing, and they're beginning to figure out what their purpose in the world will be," Wilcox says. "We know that people often turn to God in the midst of momentous changes. Adolescents are no different."

Today's sophisticated research is simply echoing the wisdom of the Bible: "Those who fear the Lord are secure; He will be a place of refuge for their children. Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it. It is better to have little with fear for the Lord than to have great treasure with turmoil. Fear of the Lord gives life, security, and protection from harm" (Proverbs 14:26; 22:6; 15:16; 19:23, NLT).

(Rev.) Walt Brouwer is pastor of Christ Community Church in Nanaimo, B.C.

It is in vain, O men, that you seek within yourselves the cure for your miseries. All your insight only leads you to the knowledge that it is not in yourselves that you will discover the true and the good. The philosophers promised them to you, and have not been able to keep their promises... Your principal maladies are pride, which cuts you off from God, and sensuality, which binds you to the earth; and they have done nothing but foster at least one of these maladies. If they have given you God for your object, it has only been to pander to your pride; they have made you think that you were like Him and resembled Him by your nature. And those who have grasped the vanity of such a pretension have cast you down into the other abyss by making you believe that your nature was like that of the beasts of the field, and have led you to seek your good in lust, which is the lot of animals.

... Blaise Pascal

What's does "word of knowledge" mean?

Chapter & Verse

Al Wolters

"To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy..." (1 Cor 12:8-10)

This verse occurs in Paul's famous and controversial chapter on the spiritual gifts. He gives a whole list of special abilities which the Spirit gives for the upbuilding of the Christian community. It was long thought that these so-called charismatic gifts were restricted to the time of the apostles, and that they ceased with the completion of the biblical canon. However, it is now widely acknowledged, especially because of the phenomenal spread of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements in the twentieth century, that this is mistaken. Certainly there is no explicit biblical evidence for the traditional view, known as "cessationism."

Exegetical difficulties

However, even if we accept (as I do) that the charismatic gifts were not limited to New Testament times, and that many of the "manifestations" reported in charismatic circles and elsewhere today are genuine gifts of the Spirit, it is often still difficult to know what the New Testament means by some of the gifts of the Spirit which it describes.

A case in point is the "word of knowledge" (or "message of knowledge" in the NIV) which Paul mentions in 1 Cor 1:8. This is the only place where this particular spiritual gift is mentioned, and the context is not very helpful in specifying its meaning. The Greek underlying the translation "word" or "message" is *logos*, a noun which is notorious for its wide semantic range, including such senses as "account," "speech," "reason," "ratio," and much more. In addition, the word translated "knowledge" (Greek *gnosis*) can refer to anything from intimate personal knowledge to scientific cognition.

What can this gift of "word of knowledge" possibly mean? How is it distinguished from the preceding "word of wisdom"? It is difficult to be certain, especially since it is unclear from the Greek whether we should translate "*the* word of knowledge" or "*a* word of knowledge."

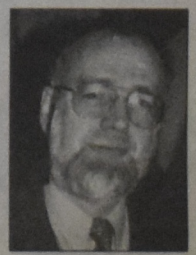
Special insight and intercessory prayer

Nevertheless, there is a tradition of interpretation which gives this phrase quite a precise meaning. Especially in charismatic circles, it is often said that a "word of knowledge" refers to a special insight that a person receives, especially an insight into another person's emotional or private life, that they couldn't have received by ordinary means, and that speaks directly and powerfully to an issue in the other person's life. This can happen in direct intercessory prayer, especially when the intercessor is praying with their hand on the person being prayed over. It's as though the intercessor receives a miraculous revelation about someone's life which when spoken to that person can be a great blessing, a healing gift.

I know of people who have this gift, and have been blessed by it myself. I have no doubt that it is a gift of the Spirit.

However, is that what Paul had in mind when he spoke of "word of knowledge" in our passage? Although I would not exclude the possibility, I tend to think that what Paul had in mind was something broader, something that has a closer connection with what he normally means by "word" and "knowledge" in his letters. I suspect it has to do with insight into the gospel, and the discernment required to apply the gospel to contemporary situations. It would not necessarily exclude the other sense, but it would usually be more comprehensive and communal, having to do with preaching, theology, and Christian cultural engagement. Although I cannot be sure about this, I suspect it is a mistake to equate "word of knowledge" specifically and exclusively with the phenomenon I have described.

There is another point that I would like to make in this connection. We should not think of the gift of a word of knowledge in exclusively "supernatural" terms. Of course, if it is God the Holy Spirit who gives this gift, it is supernatural in the sense that it is a gift from God. But that does not mean that it excludes ordinary creational realities, like intelligence, emotional sensitivity, or training. A good sermon may be a "word of knowledge," and none the worse for having been carefully prepared. Even in the case of the more narrowly defined gift which I have described, I suspect that the Spirit uses a creational ability, perhaps akin to telepathy, that some people have to a greater degree than others. God always deals with us in creational terms.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, On. For a discerning and learned discussion of the exegetical issue raised in this column, he would recommend the magisterial commentary on 1 Corinthians by Anthony C. Thistelton (Eerdmans, 2000).

Church

Archbishop Akinola: "Fire exists by burning: the church exists by mission"

Michael Craske

Nairobi, Kenya – A major conference held in Nairobi April 12-15 for representatives from across the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) has called for an Anglican renewal in the continent, both through prayer and a dynamic approach to mission and evangelism.

In a key note address on the third day of the conference, Peter Akinola, the Primate of All Nigeria, also issued a challenge to the delegates for a five-year evangelism strategy, in which everything in the African Church should be committed to mission, as he believed that "there cannot be any other goal than that of 'Africa for Christ.'"

Peter Akinola, centre, leaving the conference with other delegates.

The CAPA Mission and Evangelism Conference, held at a retreat centre outside of Kenya's capital city, heard a wide range of views from across Africa with delegates sharing their experiences of mission work. It reviewed how African evangelism had been successful and challenged itself to analyze its current efforts and weaknesses. At the conference's close a series of proposals were finalized in a summary document after a succession of increasingly focused group debates.

The conference summary document stated that in order to develop a universal vision for African evangelism, CAPA should follow the example set by the Apostles and the early Church. The goal, it said, would be for every African Anglican to be an evangelist and that congregations should no longer be passive receivers of communion, but should openly promote Christian values and call people to Christ.

But it also warned that this could only be achieved by leadership. "Church leadership – primates, bishops, clergy – must be catalysts and role models in proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. 'Every Anglican an Evangelist' is a feasible objective but must commence with 'Every Clergy member an evangelist,'" the summary stated, adding that a key to success would be a realignment in the role of theological colleges. Several delegates expressed concern during the debates that colleges were academic before being spiritually aware and that they were not placing emphasis on the "training of the Christian character."

Too many nominal members

The document also outlined a major concern for all African churches, that of nominalism – where a member of a parish claims to be Christian yet fails to live out Christianity in their lives. "Too many African Anglicans say they are Christians but do not take part in Church events," said one delegate from Nigeria, who highlighted the Church of Nigeria's method for combating this problem. The method, which was adopted in the summary document, ensures that the community has an active role in their church by promoting stewardship in Church affairs. In future, church projects – such as building, church planting, and pastoral care – should be owned and empowered by members of a congregation so each would feel part of the church community.

Pastoral care was also a key concern, with many feeling that this was why many other denominations were more successful in retaining members. A newly-converted Christian should feel their spiritual lives and health were of absolute importance, it said, not only to their congregation, but also to their pastor, bishop, and primate.

The report also talked extensively of Africa-specific problems for evangelism that might not affect the larger Anglican Communion. In particular the report highlighted tribalism. Many delegates expressed great concern that tribal considerations influenced the election of bishops and clergy, and said that any cultural practices that were inconsistent with God's word – and therefore tribalism – should be discarded. A suggestion to eliminate such tribal preferment included a request that all bishops and clergy be periodically moved across diocesan boundaries, even where congregations wanted to keep particular clergy in place.

"In this way," stated a delegate from Rwanda, "good ideas and work in keeping with God's word would be spread throughout the African Church. What a member of clergy learns from his parish, and what he has – in turn – taught them, would be spread to enrich an entire province."

Archbishop Akinola, when issuing his challenge after hearing of the ideas brought up in the discussion groups, also warned the delegates of other possible problems. He said that evangelism must be properly planned and administered through evaluation and monitoring, adding that each evangelist should report directly to their church hierarchy and constantly inform them of progress and difficulties. He also implored them to take up the spirit of evangelism in the right attitude and put aside secular concerns, highlighting that Africa was abundant in God-given resources and that too many people excused the lack of mission work by having too little money.

"Until the continent is won for Christ, the Church cannot claim any justification for its existence in this part of God's world," he said.

Engaging in discussions on the conference grounds.

African Anglicans give US Episcopal Church three months to repent

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi, (ENI) – African Anglican archbishops have urged the worldwide Anglican Communion to give three months to the US Episcopal (Anglican) Church to repent for authorizing the consecration of an openly gay priest as a bishop or face disciplinary action. "It should be given a three-month period at maximum to retrace its steps and come back to the main fold of the Anglican world," said Nigerian Anglican Archbishop Peter Akinola at a pressbriefing in Nairobi on Thursday at the end of a two-day meeting of African archbishops in the Kenyan capital. The statement follows the consecration in November of V. Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire in the US Episcopal Church, a move that triggered controversy throughout the more than 75-million strong Anglican Communion. At the time of Robinson's appointment, the leaders of the world's Anglican churches set up an investigative commission to report within 12 months. The African Anglican leaders in Nairobi reaffirmed their rejection of homosexuality and said they wanted the commission to discipline the US Episcopal Church. Before Robinson's appointment, Archbishop Akinola had threatened to sever links with dioceses that endorsed homosexual relations. In Nairobi, Akinola said most Anglican churches in Africa were refusing financial support from the US church and were seeking to become self-reliant. "For many years, we have developed this dependency syndrome, which must be broken," he said. "We are encouraging ourselves and we beginning to realize that God has put enough in the continent for us to be reliant." In an interview with Ecumenical News International, Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi of the Anglican Church of Kenya said the matter was complicated, since there were people in the US Episcopal Church who were opposed to homosexuality and were still friends of the African churches. "We are giving time to our brothers in America to sort themselves out," Nzimbi said. "They are doing so by grouping Orthodox churches through a network of confessing dioceses and parishes." Anglican churches in Africa did not deny that there were homosexuals in their churches, Nzimbi noted, but he said they came to church so that they could change.

Church

Sudan imposes Islamic law on south

Christian woman whipped for not wearing headscarf

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass) – Sudan's Islamic regime in Khartoum lashed and fined a young Christian Sudanese woman in mid April for not wearing a headscarf in public in the capital city.

Cecilia John Holland, 27, was given 40 lashes on her back and fined 10,000 Sudanese dinars ($40) by the Sizana Islamic Court in Khartoum on April 14, sources in the capital confirmed.

A Christian born in southern Sudan, Holland was traveling by minibus to her home in the Khartoum suburb of Haj Yousif on the night of April 13 when she was arrested by a group of 10 public-order policemen, some in uniform and others in plainclothes.

She was just boarding the bus at 9 p.m. when the police apparently spotted her. A police van pulled ahead of the bus, ordering the driver to stop, and Holland was dragged off the bus into the van.

When Holland tried to pull free, protesting that she was a Christian and a southerner, she was struck with a hard blow on the neck and forced into the van. Four other women were already detained there, all wearing scarves, although their attire was tight and revealing.

With temperatures in Khartoum ranging between 100 and 105 degrees F., Holland was wearing modest long sleeves and an ankle-length skirt, but her hair was uncovered.

The police told Holland she was being arrested for not wearing a scarf. No one in Khartoum, "even a non-Muslim," she was told, was exempt from Islamic bans against wearing improper dress.

Imposition of Islamic law subject of talks

Two hours later, after seven more women had been arrested, the police delivered the van-load of detainees to the police station near Khartoum's city center. The next morning the accused women were taken to the Islamic Court, where a policeman swore an oath on the Koran and then read out the charges against Holland and the other women. None of the accused women were allowed to say a word to the court.

Declaring Holland guilty, the court sentenced her to be lashed 40 times on her back and pay a fine of 10,000 Sudanese dinars. That afternoon, after being whipped and paying the cash penalty, she was released. The fine represented a third of Holland's monthly salary.

Holland, who holds a diploma in catering from Khartoum Applied Sciences College, is employed as a catering officer for a local non-governmental organization.

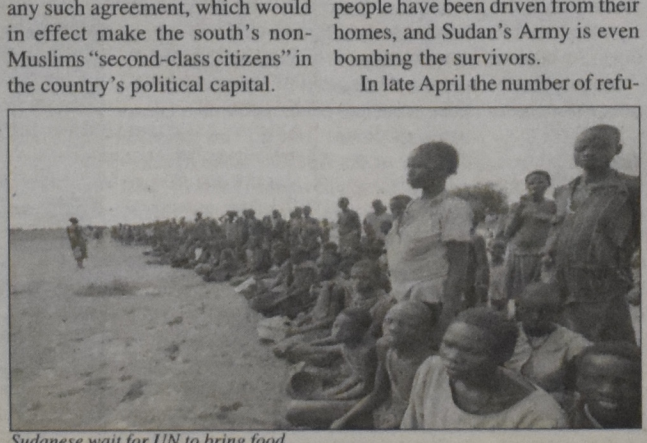
Holland's forced subjection to the restrictions and harsh punishments of Islamic law dramatizes one key issue now deadlocking a year of ongoing peace talks between the National Islamic Front government in Khartoum and the southern leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Earlier this month, the Khartoum government refused to compromise on its insistence that Islamic law govern all Sudanese citizens residing in Khartoum. More than two million non-Muslim southerners live in and around the capital, displaced by the last 20 years of civil war between the African Christian-animist south and the Arab Muslim north.

So far the SPLM's alternative proposals have been rejected outright, to either establish a separate enclave within the capital for southerners, or subject its non-Muslim Sudanese to the same secular laws to be followed in the south during a six-year period of self-rule.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir claimed on April 13 that southern negotiators had abandoned their demands and agreed to have "only one legislation" in Khartoum. According to an Agence France Press report, Bashir said the compromise came "after we gave them convincing guarantees regarding the cultural and religious diversities among the citizens."

But a SPLM spokesman denied any such agreement, which would in effect make the south's non-Muslims "second-class citizens" in the country's political capital.



Sudanese wait for UN to bring food.

UN warns of Rwanda-like genocide in Sudan

UN Secretary – General Kofi Annan used a conference marking the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide to draw attention to the latest atrocities committed by the government of Sudan on its own population. The Muslim and Arab dominated government has been persecuting and bombing the Christian and animist south for years, killing tens of thousands, but is now engaged in peace talks with leaders from that area. Recently, however, it has also begun to wreak similar violence on the black Sudanese peoples in the West.

In a BBC interview the U.N.'s Sudan coordinator, Mukesh Kapila, described the situation as similar in character, if not scale, to the Rwanda genocide. "This is ethnic cleansing," he said. "This is the world's greatest humanitarian crisis, and I don't know why the world isn't doing more about it."

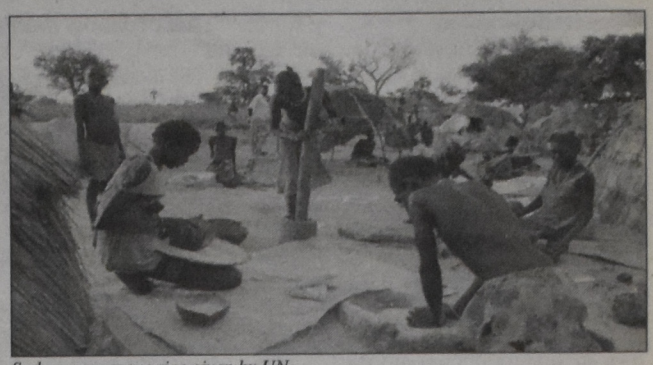
Jan Egeland, the UN's chief emergency relief co-ordinator, is among those who have briefed Mr. Annan. "We have received credible reports that show a clear and consistent pattern: entire villages are looted, burned down and sometimes bombed," he said.

"Large numbers of civilians have been killed and scores of women and children have been abducted, raped and tortured.

"Scorched-earth tactics are being employed throughout Darfur, including the deliberate destruction of schools, wells, seeds and food supplies, making whole towns and villages uninhabitable. Not even the camps for the refugees and the internally displaced are immune from attacks."

These actions were "ethnic cleansing," he said.

Some 1,000 people are being killed a week, tribeswomen are being systematically raped, 700,000 people have been driven from their homes, and Sudan's Army is even bombing the survivors.



Sudanese prepare rice given by UN.

In late April the number of refugees in the western region of Darfur had risen to one million, the UN said April 20. The UN's country team in Sudan reported that shelter materials in Darfur were "completely exhausted." Many camps are in remote areas without access to water and therefore needed "urgent emergency water deliveries." The team warned that this situation, coupled with the problem of overcrowding, was likely to lead to outbreaks of cholera, meningitis, measles and diarrhoea.

Conflict ethnic, not religious

Asked what the connection is between the North-South conflict and the western rebellion, Sudanese Ambassador Khidir Haroun Ahmed told *The Washington Times* in an interview at his embassy in early April that "the two phenomena are related." He said that "the people in Darfur saw the approaching settlement [between Khartoum and the southern rebels] as leaving them out of things."

The western revolt was initiated last year by two black Muslim guerrilla groups which began fighting government-backed Arab militias in the region. The fighting is not over religion, for the victims as well as the killers are Muslims. It is more ethnic and racial, reflecting some of the ancient tension between herdsmen (the Arabs in Darfur) and farmers (the black Africans, although they herd as well). The Arabs and non-Arabs compete for water and forage, made scarce by environmental degradation and the spread of the desert.

The rebellion intensified as the North-South agreement to share power and the country's oil wealth neared completion. According to reports from East Africa, the rebels feared that Darfur would be left with virtually nothing. Moreover, they feared that once the North-South conflict was settled, the government could throw its full weight against the Darfur rebels.

Sudan is Africa's largest country and has about 40 million inhabitants. It has borders with nine countries, all of which will be affected to a greater or lesser degree by the conclusion of a peace deal in their giant neighbor. One of the greatest effects of a peace deal would be the return of hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees to their country from the neighboring states.

Summarizing the actions of the militantly Islamist and Arabist government of Sudan over the past years in the *National Review*, Paul Marshall writes: "Over the last 15 years, the Sudanese government has brought together extremist Sunnis and Shiites; turned itself into international-terrorism central; harbored bin Laden; promoted slavery (bin Laden has probably owned African slaves); imposed a reactionary version of Islamic law that includes crucifixion, stoning to death of mothers who are out of wedlock, and 'cross amputation' (removing the hand and foot from opposite sides of the body); waged what the U.S. House of Representatives has called a 'genocidal' war on its southern, largely Christian and animist population; promoted forced conversion to its brand of Islam; strafed refugees with helicopter gunships; and manipulated food relief as a weapon, resulting in the death of over two million people – more than in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, Cote D'Ivoire, and Liberia combined. It has also produced four million displaced people, the largest such population on the face of the earth."

[Written with files from *The Washington Times, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The National Post* and *The National Review*.]

Media

What the media and the scholars tell us about the Jesus of our faith

Harry der Nederlanden

Religion, and Christianity in particular, has been attracting more and more attention in the secular media. On April 5, ABC aired a three-hour special hosted by Peter Jennings titled "Jesus and Paul: the Word and the Witness," and *Time Magazine* in a feature story asked the question, "Why did Jesus have to die?" In early March *Maclean's* used Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ* to examine "What we know about Jesus" and a month later it focused on the work of a number of Christian pastors in different communities across Canada.

Even before Gibson's film hit the theaters, *Newsweek* addressed a ten-page article, "Who killed Jesus?" to the antisemitism issue. Inspired by the financial success of Gibson's film, in March ABC dusted off a film on Judas that had been sitting on the shelf for some time, and it attracted over nine million viewers, even though it played opposite "Everybody Loves Raymond." The miniseries "Jesus," originally aired in 2000, was brought back in abbreviated form to exploit the newly stimulated public interest in "The Man Nobody Knows." But with all the coverage, have we come to know Jesus any better?

Tim Graham of Media Research Center acknowledges that religion coverage in the US has more than doubled from what it was 10 years ago. But he complains that the media's selection of religious experts is "dominated by those hostile to religious orthodoxy." The American Family Association objected strongly to Jennings' *Jesus and Paul* because most of the experts consulted displayed "an underlying worldview of distrust in Scripture and Jesus' divinity." Focus on the Family criticized the program for attacking "the legitimacy of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures" and for trying to "reduce the Word of God to myths."

When I watched the Jennings program, I was actually quite pleased to see that ABC did, in fact, include a few scholars who are quite evangelical in their approach to the New Testament. But that was probably because my expectations were low. The article in *Time*, written by David van Biema, however, did an excellent job presenting Christian reflection on the atonement in an interesting and accessible way. Christians can learn from it – perhaps even some pastors. The weakness of the reporting on "the man nobody knows" cannot entirely be blamed on the secular media or even on liberal theologians from mainline churches, for, as Biema reports in his article, even many evangelical churches in America have hidden the scandal of the cross. He quotes Jack Miles, author of *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*, who says that Americans have tended to bypass the suffering Savior to focus on the friend who walks with me and talks with me.

"That probably didn't happen at all"

The increased interest in things religious and the realization that there's a category of consumers out there willing to part with their money to have that interest indulged has disadvantages as well as advantages. Not just major magazines and the media but also secular bookstores are now catering to an audience that was once served primarily by a certain coterie of familiar, trustworthy writers. In the big bookstores, most of the books on the shelves in the Christianity section are of dubious orthodoxy at best. Most of us are quite aware of that, and we know that not all scholars are equally responsible in approaching Scripture. Still, I must admit that I like to read some of the left-wing writers on occasion; they often make connections that are surprising and that can deepen our appreciation of the complexity bound up with the simplicity of Scripture.

Nevertheless, it is still disconcerting and dismaying to me to hear a supposedly Christian scholar say of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin, "That probably didn't happen at all."

That's what Dominic Crossan, a man who has written prolifically about Jesus and the New Testament setting, said on the program hosted by Jennings. Another well-known scholar agreed that the picture of Pilate sympathetically questioning Jesus and then washing his hands after finding him innocent was probably fabricated later on by a Christian editor trying to curry favor with the Romans. (If that was what he was trying to do, he did a lousy job, for he left a lot of far more offensive material stand.) The historical Pilate, these scholars are certain, was a thug, a butcher who wouldn't have bothered with a trial and who didn't flinch from murdering people even in batches. On two occasions he was recalled to Rome for his brutality: it wasn't considered prudent by Rome.

What got Jesus into trouble, serious trouble, was not his disagreements with the Jewish leaders. Freelancers like him were familiar to them. It was his preaching about starting a kingdom that angered the Roman authorities, who'd had a bellyfull of trouble from those unassimilable Jews. At bottom Jesus' message was political and subversive, and that's what got him crucified, said several of the experts.

Strange, though, isn't it, that the Romans waited so long to pick him up, and that the Gospel writers often speak of the threat from Israel's religious leaders and not from the Romans. But, I forgot, that was all probably added later on too – just to make their fellow-Jews look nasty to followers of Jesus and to set themselves off from the old faith.

What about that scene depicted by so many artists of the disciples and Mary taking down Jesus from the cross? That most likely didn't happen either, Crossan confidently asserted. It was the Roman practice to leave the bodies on the cross for several days, to be picked apart by the birds and the dogs as a lesson to any aspiring rebels.

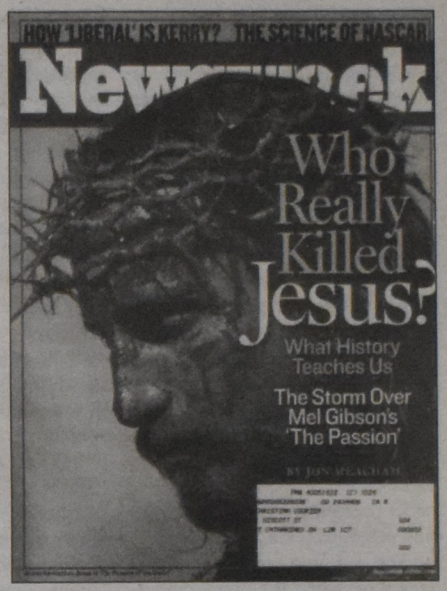
Where do the new views of Jesus come from?

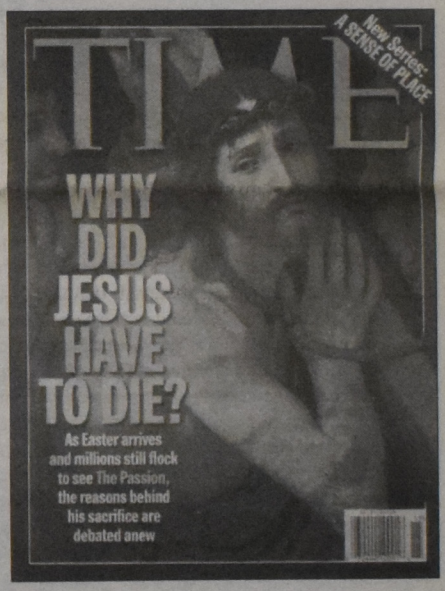
Browse through the religious books section in any Chapters, Indigo or Coles, and you will find numerous books on Christianity or Jesus that similarly play fast and loose with the biblical stories, reconstructing them almost at will, it seems. Every few years produces another "revolutionary" account of who Jesus really was and what he and his disciples were doing and what the early church was like. Some of these books are written by out-and-out unbelievers whose primary interest is in discrediting Christianity. Most, however, are written by scholars who believe they are serving the truth and delving more deeply into Scripture.

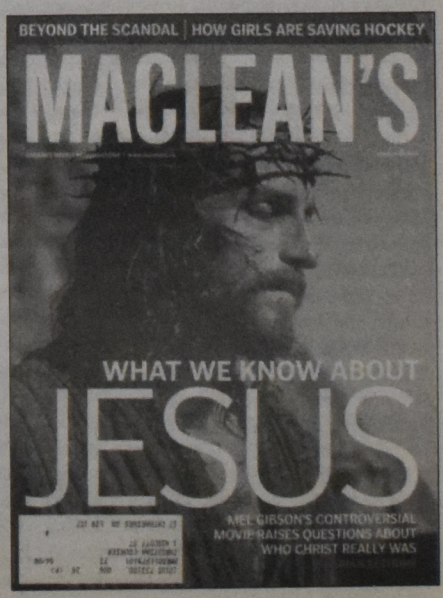
What kind of view do they have of Scripture, of the Gospels in particular, that allows them to set aside entire segments of familiar stories so cavalierly and to pronounce so confidently that it couldn't have happened that way and Jesus probably never said this or that?

Although the Gospels are inspired of God, we know that they have a history like any other texts written at the time. All the Gospels were written a few decades after Jesus' death and resurrection from stories that had been told and retold and from collections of sayings and stories that Jesus told when he was on earth. They are, therefore, written looking back over Jesus' ministry, with the advantage and the deeper understanding of the cross, the resurrection and reflection on those events. The Gospels are not a factual report, relating incident by incident a chronology of events. Nor are they what we would call a biography. They are interested in telling the good news, so they select sayings and doings from Jesus' ministry that will explain who he was and why he had to die and why this is good news to those who believe in him.

Any description of how the finished texts came into being is educated guesswork, of course. But no one supposes that any of the Apostles acted like secretaries, taking down the words of Jesus as he spoke them and keeping a daily diary of events. Since there is much in Matthew and Luke that seems to have been taken from Mark, even conservative Bible scholars think it likely that they borrowed from him. And since there are other passages common to Matthew and Luke that are not in Mark, the one probably got it from the other or they both got it from another source that has


HOW 'LIBERAL' IS KERRY? THE SCIENCE OF NASCAR
Newsweek
Who Really Killed Jesus?
What History Teaches Us
The Storm Over Mel Gibson's 'The Passion'


TIME
New Series: A SENSE OF PLACE
WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE?
As Easter arrives and millions still flock to see The Passion, the reasons behind his sacrifice are debated anew


BEYOND THE SCANDAL | HOW GIRLS ARE SAVING HOCKEY
MACLEAN'S
WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT
JESUS
MEL GIBSON'S CONTROVERSIAL MOVIE RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO CHRIST REALLY WAS

been lost. But the composition could have come about in any one of a number of ways, so reconstructing that process is something of a scholarly puzzle, a game.

Much of what historians and theologians, like Dominic Crossan, say about Jesus comes out of an attempt to filter out of the Gospel accounts the levels of interpretation and selection added later by the writers or editors of the "original" accounts. Most scholars who undertake this "quest for the historical Jesus" (sometimes called the "third quest") are more chary than Crossan about eliminating entire episodes and reams of sayings. But for the most part they share a similar methodology.

Unreliable texts

They assume that the process was a wholly human process, subject to error, bias and distortion. This isn't because they assume the Gospel writers to be liars, but because the latter worked with a different idea of truth than holds for impartial reporting nowadays. As followers of Jesus who had come to believe that he was indeed the promised Messiah and the Son of God, and as members of the early Christian church, they imposed these later interpretations on their recollections of what they had seen and heard, even mixing in bits of the church's liturgy and adding interpretations to Jesus' parables and so on.

Crossan names three discernible steps: retention of original Jesus material; development of these materials; and creation of new materials. So he views the Gospels as we have them as laminated layers (like plywood) of development and interpretation. It is his vocation to peel the various layers off to give us the authentic stuff, the original layer, the unvarnished truth of the way it was before the Gospel writers superimposed their biases.

The *MacLean's* story, "What we know about Jesus" (March 8), written by Brian Bethune, says that, although most historians agree that Jesus actually existed, what Jesus believed about himself and what he really said "is forever beyond their grasp."

"Most biblical experts," says Bethune, "sweep away much that is beloved in the Christian tradition, including the whole of Jesus' childhood. No virgin birth..., no wise men, no heavenly choir of angels, no debating the elder at age 12. All of it retroactively applied by followers who believed so astonishing a figure must have shown signs and portents throughout his life."

Although Bethune mocks the methods of the Jesus Seminar, these words could have been taken directly from the writings of its most prominent spokesmen. The phrase "most biblical experts" (or "most scholars/ historians/ critics") occurs frequently in such magazine articles and TV specials, as if there were actual consensus among academics on these things, and as if conservative biblical scholars can safely be ignored because of their bias.

Newsweek's Feb. 16 cover story, "Who killed Jesus?" generalizes confidently: "Though countless believers take it as the immutable Word of God, Scripture is not always a faithful record of historical events: the Bible is the product of human authors who were writing in particular times and places with particular points to make and visions to advance."

Actually, this is not a hugely objectionable statement, except that it assumes that the shaping influence of the biblical authors makes the record less faithful. On the contrary, it would have been less faithful had they tried telling the story "objectively," that is, shorn of all the truth they had learned from the culminating events – his death and resurrection – and from what Jesus had taught them directly after he arose, and from what the Apostles and Paul had learned, and from what the Holy Spirit had told them.

Sifting for the truth

Instead of accepting the texts as they stand as the end product of a process that has enriched the telling of the truth and deepened our understanding, Crossan and entire squadrons of scholars like him are committed to giving us Jesus in the raw. The surface of the Gospel accounts cannot be relied on: they are impure, adulterated, encrusted over. The pure, simple teachings of the man called Jesus have been coopted by later orthodoxy, gilded over to reflect a theology that is a tool for imposing the views and the control of the hierarchy. A vital, down-to-earth, exemplary life and teaching is inflated into an institutionalized religion in the Gospels.

In other words, the gilding is not an enrichment but a fall into corruption. There's a parallel here with Gnosticism. The gnostics, influenced by a worldview similar to Platonism, thought of salvation as a freeing from our involvement in the material, bodily aspects of existence to attain a purer, more spiritual state. Similarly, many contemporary scholars find the Gospel texts far too encumbered with the historical, social, traditional, material thickness of writing, of communication. So they begin to peel apart layers, or, to use another metaphor, to sift the thick, lumpy materials through various screens. Every scholar designs the screens a little differently. One of the screens Crossan uses, for example, is cross-cultural anthropology. From his anthropological studies, Crossan learns that in societies like the one in which Jesus grew up, carpenters were ranked even lower than peasants, who were illiterate. Therefore, Jesus was in all likelihood illiterate. Therefore, the story of Jesus teaching the learned teachers at the Temple is not reliable.

Another screen used by many is that of Greco-Roman history. This screen filters out the story of Jesus' trial and Pilate's handwashing. The Pilate of history (probably) wouldn't have acted that way. And so it goes. One screen after another removing what seems unlikely or improbable or suspicious or just not in accordance with someone's preconceived idea of who Jesus – the real Jesus concealed under all that ideology – really was.

Over the last decades we've had an existentialist Jesus who gets us into contact with the deepest levels of our inner being, the revolutionary Jesus who challenges the establishment's claims to authority, the Jesus who identifies with the poor, the despised, the powerless, the Jesus who riddles us with deep, wise sayings, the mystic Jesus, the prophetic Jesus, the kind, loving Jesus, and so on. Most of these portraits are erected over against the preexistent Christ, who was with God from the beginning, who put on our flesh and who self-consciously took the path to the cross to suffer and to die in our place, and whom God raised on the third day, and who now reigns with him in heaven and who will return one day to judge the living and the dead and to establish his Kingdom forever.

Enforced unity

That confession of faith, that nutshell of orthodoxy, says Elaine Pagels, another theologian who often appears on TV and who is regularly quoted in the media, is a later product of Christianity. Pagels has written several books about Gnosticism, and she has made it her mission to muddy the difference between the Gospels and the gnostic writings discovered about 50 years ago. Or rather she's aware of the difference, but she wants us to see them alongside the Gospels and other writings now lost as the product of the early church's creative reflection on the sayings and the life of Jesus. The early church, she argues, was not united in its understanding the way we have been led to think. That unity was imposed later by the clerical thought-police. The clergy needed a high doctrine of Jesus Christ to serve as an image of their authority and to legitimize it, so they suppressed all other interpretations of who Jesus was by labeling them as heretical, by persecuting those who propounded such views and by destroying the texts of competing gospels.

Whereas Paul and the early church were concerned to protect the faith against the corruptions and fantasies of the gnostics, Pagels seems determined to reverse that process and assimilate gnostic heresies back into the church. Crossan, Pagels and others treat the Gospel of Thomas, one of the texts found at Nag Hammadi, with as much credence as the Gospels themselves; in fact, at times Crossan seems to treat Thomas and the non-existent Q as more authoritative.

Dissolving the basis

When one sees what weird and wonderful things so-called biblical scholars do with source, form and redaction criticism, it is little wonder that orthodox believers become leery of the entire enterprise. If it makes us suspicious of the testimonies available to the Christian church in the Gospels, and urges us to seek for revelation in non-existent source texts behind those we have, such scholarship becomes poisonous to the faith of the church. It dissolves the basis of its faith: the testimony of eye-witnesses guided by the Spirit to the way the truth and the light.

Conservative scholars do make limited use of such studies in more responsible ways, of course, to illuminate the structure of the texts we do have. Many of the scholars quoted most often by the media and whose books are most available in the big bookstores, however, ignore the role of the Holy Spirit and of inspiration. They stress that the composition of the Gospels is wholly human work. In that they are right, but they proceed as if the operation of God is thereby excluded and reduce them to merely human writings.

In fact, often they treat them with less respect than secular texts. Although I write not as an historian, cultural anthropologist or theologian, but as a layman, I find it very

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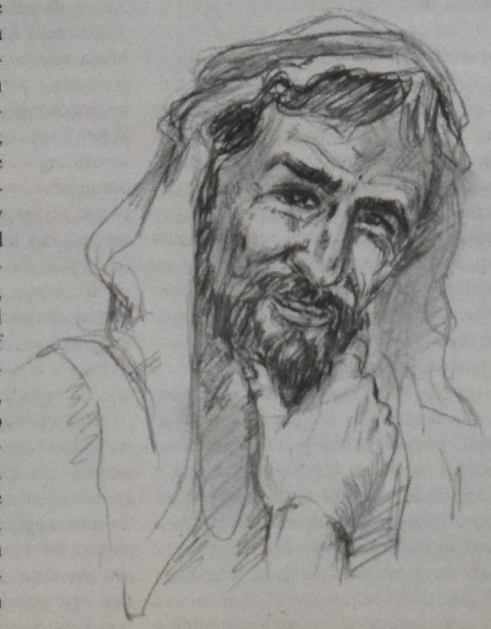


"Whom do you say that I am?"

Family

Snapshots of Mom on Mother's Day

Ron de Boer

If my mother reads this, she'll probably sit upright in her chair and say, "You little –" for the thousandth time in my life.

But, Mom, before picking up the phone and filling in the blank, read all the way to the end. Like life, the journey of this article is punctuated with humor, sadness, and finally… well, you'll have to get to the end to find out.

My earliest memory of my mother is of her bending over the flower bed in front of our farm house, an apt image in that my mother's hands are always busy doing something. Like many ladies of her generation, "Thou shalt not rest" is the eleventh commandment. Work gloves on, cap on her head, she was raking the soil and digging little holes into which she dropped bulbs and tiny dirt cubes of impatiens and geraniums.

Horse bites and wooden spoons

I was in kindergarten, walking down our long laneway after being spit out by the yellow school bus. As I approached, my mother stood up, took off her gloves, smiled, gave me a kiss and asked me about my day. My arrival marked her cue to go in the house and prepare lunch. Every day of my childhood, my mother was home awaiting my arrival from school. Sure as the sun came up, she was there. My mother's full time job was raising boys – four of us. And she was good at it.

If there was any mother suited for a houseful of rowdy, loud, smelly boys it was my mother. She knew how to keep us in line. Her favorite methods of punishment were "horse bites," in which she grabbed a handful of your leg skin, and the wooden spoon, with which she chased us if we were fighting or teasing each other.

We'd run through the living room and up the stairs with our hands over our rear-ends while Mom, red-faced and fed-up with our tomfoolery, would pursue us, holding the wooden spoon in front of her as if it were a sword, occasionally whacking the backs of our legs. Of course, we always feigned shrieks straight from a torture chamber to get her to believe she'd taught us a lesson and to stop chasing us – and then we'd collapse on our beds clutching our stomachs with laughter because we'd made her so mad.

Being chased by Mom with the wooden spoon was a badge of honor, and it bonded us brothers more often than punished us. We'd all meet in the offender's bedroom and re-hash every detail of the chase up the stairs. Mom probably knew this. Getting us out of the kitchen while she cooked the daily "hot meal" was probably her goal all along.

Another way she paralyzed us into submission was by tickling. I've never met a more effective tickler than my mother. Her favourite line was, "I can put every single one of you boys on your backs in seconds no matter how big you get." She was right. Despite her 5'2" frame, Mom would attack with tentacle-like fingers, double us over in a couple seconds then bring us to a point of mercy as she dug her digits into the most sensitive tickle points in our ribs and stomach. Even up until these last few years as arthritis gets the best of her, Mom was able to *rassle* each one of us six foot plus boys to the floor in a heartbeat – much to the enjoyment of her grandchildren.

Mom deflated

It's hard to imagine my mother ever sinning, but one claim I can make over my brothers is that I once heard Mom swear. The incident involved a pick-up truck, a thermos of "cold drink" and a harrow hidden in the long grass at the back of the farm. Whenever my father was planting or harvesting, my mother would send one of us in search for the cloud of dust that was my father on a tractor. We would bring him a jug of cold water and a couple of home-made cookies wrapped in tin foil.

On the day of Mom's one and only cuss word, she decided to deliver the goodies. She and I hopped in the pick-up, drove to the back of the farm, watched my father's adam's apple bob up and down as he gulped the water straight from the thermos, then returned to the truck. My mother put *'ol blue* in reverse, backed into some long grass beside the rusted water pump, and set off two cannons – three, if you included mom's expletive. Bang! Bang!. "D*%&$!#!"

We jumped out and inspected the two back flat tires. My father had "parked" a harrow – a farm implement with long steel spikes for tilling the land – beside the laneway. The spring grass had grown up around it. Mom had just proven that steel spikes and inflated rubber tubes do not a marriage make. I don't remember anything else about the tires. I just remember – in my wide eyed, ten year old mind – thinking: *Cool, my Mom's a swear-mouth.*

Mom inflated . . . and penalized

She may have been small in stature, but Mom was larger than life when it came to protecting her kids. You didn't mess with my mother if you wronged one of her boys. When I was thirteen, a long-haired twenty-something with a tattooed girlfriend stole my brand new football jersey while our family swam at the beach. Later that afternoon, we saw my brand new football jersey loping across the parking lot toward a jacked-up Mustang where several other long-haired, tattooed guys and girls were smoking and drinking. Red-faced with anger, my mother marched straight over to Long Hair and Tattoo and demanded my shirt back.

When Long Hair said it was *his* football jersey, my mother pointed to the yellow paint I had spilled on it that very week to prove it was my shirt. Long Hair shrugged. Tattoo laughed. My mother told him he should be ashamed of himself. She never got the shirt. But she taught me that day that you stand up for yourself even when you know you're going to lose.

My mother's tenacious character has given her another odd claim to fame. She is the only parent in the history of church hockey to get a penalty during a game. Sitting behind the player's bench during a tournament back in the 80s, my mother got so riled by the referees that she stood up and bellowed at their incompetence only to have the referee turn around and give her an unsportsmanlike penalty – served by …one of her own sons!

Foundations and providences

It's amazing that mothering skills came so naturally to my mother. She never knew her own mother who had died just days after my mother's birth. Raised by her father and a sister fourteen years her senior, my mother grew up in a household populated by males – good practice for her own family! – in which she took on mothering roles very early on.

Like many people of her generation, her childhood was marked with uncertainty. She was a toddler during the depression, a little girl during World War II, and an early teenager when her family packed up everything and moved to Canada. A few years after arriving in Canada, her father died.

It's not hard to find the foundation from which my mother's determination and strength comes. Her faith can be measured by her complete surrender to God, something modeled by her father and older siblings. My mother never considers the difficulties she's endured as unfair. Still a teenager, she had weathered famine, depression and death, and while grieving and praying for a better future, she always managed to maintain her sense of hope and optimism. And she always managed to keep smiling, a quality she shares with her siblings. She credits it to her deep faith in God.

The meeting of my mother and father is a lesson in providence. While crossing the Atlantic, my grandfather – my mother's father – got to talking with another Dutch immigrant family and realized a mistake had occurred that would send both families to the same farmer-sponsor. My grandfather made other arrangements, and ended up on a farm near Owen Sound. At a church function sometime later, my mother's and father's eyes locked on one another for the first time.

It's strange to think that my existence today can be credited to some immigration officer who'd made a clerical error! God works in mysterious ways. Even though – according to family lore – my grandfather didn't initially approve of my father, my parents started seeing each other in secret. They knew their destiny. They worked hard, dreamed of owning their own dairy farm, and eventually got married.

Extra birthdays

I often make the mistake of referring to

myself as a third-born as I am the third of the four DeBoer boys. But my mother and father gave birth to seven children. Their first-born, Sandra, born just before Christmas, died shortly after her birth. My mother would never know personally the mother-daughter relationship. Her own mother died during her childbirth; her only daughter died due to complications at birth.

She would have six boys after the birth of Sandra. Her fourth, Brian, and seventh, Jeffrey, were also called to heaven before any of us got to know them. My parents rarely talked about the deaths of my baby brothers and sister, but I remember my mother often turning from the kitchen counter during breakfast and saying, "You know, we would have had a birthday today."

That was it. On the outside anyway. A mother never truly forgets any of her babies. We're comforted to know that life on earth is but a quotation mark in the story of eternal life. My parents will see their children again one day.

Mom's qualifications

So how in the world did Mom become such an excellent mother? She took no parenting classes. I suspect she didn't read too many books on the subject. She grew up in a family of men. Yet, my mother is the most natural *mother* any kid could want.

She hugged and kissed freely and often, and she willingly sat on the floor and played games with us. She enabled our imaginations to roam by allowing us to build forts and set up elaborate tournaments that transformed the kitchen into various pool halls and floor hockey venues. She is selfless, always putting her children before herself.

When I was a kid, if she burned the toast, she put it on her own plate; when we complained the milk was sour, she switched her glass with ours. When I pitched in the finals of the Pee Wee softball championships against a neighboring town, Mom insisted on playing catch with me to warm up my arm on game days, even while she ran into the kitchen and cooked the "hot meal" for the rest of the family. When I was an obnoxious, stubborn teenager, she patiently taught me how to play chess – then proceeded to win every game we ever played! She smiled proudly at graduations, weddings and the baptisms of her grandchildren.

These days, my mom – like many folks her age – endures the ups and downs of arthritis and other health issues. But she doesn't talk much about them. And while her body has good and bad days, her mind and soul are always steadfast in faith, hope and optimism. Despite her hardships, her faith has never wavered. She loves her Lord, and she's firm in her knowledge that she'll be in heaven after this life. She's a model mother for us boys.

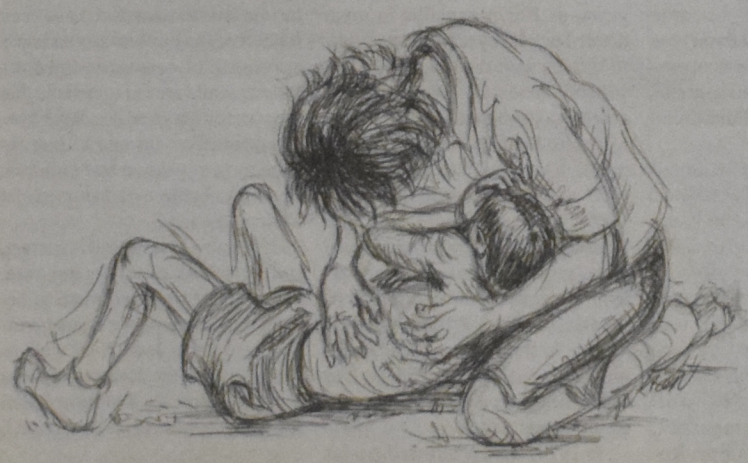
I've learned many things from my mother. She has taught me that no matter how difficult life gets, you can always make the best of it. She has taught me that someone else's problems are always worse and more worth dwelling on than your own. She has taught us all to laugh and to embrace each day with enthusiasm and cheerfulness.

Mom teaches me that being of service to others is the most honorable form of life. She's lived a selfless life and models it to this day. She teaches me how to love her kids unconditionally – even through their *bone-head* years. Her love for her children – all seven of us – is immeasurable. When she was raising us, very little in life came before her four boys, and I know she's proud of each one of us.

So, Mom, thanks for giving us life and for loving each of us in a special way.

I speak for those of us with and without voices when I say, Happy Mother's Day.

From all seven of us.



Parenting teens requires resourcefulness and faith

Lisa M. Petsche

It's official: I'm now the parent of a teenager. In another four years, there'll be three of them in our household.

I admit to some anticipatory anxiety. Parents who've been there have warned me about the trying characteristics of teenage offspring – self-absorption, silence, moodiness, fickleness, sarcasm, argumentativeness, indecisiveness, unpredictability and impulsivity. (I'm already witnessing some of the above.)

Then there are the disturbing media stories – involving mental illness, violence and other crime, suicide, truancy and school dropout, sexual activity, substance abuse and other risky behaviours – that (unfortunately) portray teens as troubled, selfish or reckless.

I'm nevertheless trying to be positive as my daughter enters the world of fashion, cosmetics, shopping, online socializing, "hanging out" with friends, pop music, reality TV, non-Disney movies, teen magazines, babysitting, career planning and, eventually, dating, driving and part-time employment.

An exhausting number of guidelines, expectations and rules need to be established along the way, though. My husband and I find ourselves pondering (and sometimes debating) issues like where to draw the line with hair coloring and body piercing, how much telephone and online chat time is reasonable, and how much influence to exert over our daughter's music choices. It's an ongoing mental and moral challenge to balance permissiveness and protectiveness, privilege and responsibility.

And while putting a good person out into the world is ultimately rewarding, emotionally it's hard to witness our once tiny and totally dependent offspring changing and separating from us, because of the loss involved.

Although I can't yet offer much first-hand advice on parenting teens, these are some basics I've gleaned from various sources:

-Take responsibility for keeping the lines of communication open. Regularly spend time with your teen – including one to one – and make yourself available when she needs to talk. Give her your full attention.
-Never minimize his concerns; always listen and offer advice with sensitivity.
-Make the effort to learn about her world: what's going on at school, who she's hanging out with, what she's reading and listening to. Encourage her to invite friends over so you can get to know them.
-Encourage him to pursue interests and develop abilities; this fosters needed confidence and purpose.

Other parents can be a valuable source of support and advice. But we should also educate ourselves about the developmental tasks of adolescence and learn a variety of methods for helping kids negotiate them. Resources include lectures, workshops and courses offered by school boards, child and family service agencies and community health departments, as well as print publications.

Although most parenting periodicals address developmental issues only through age 12, a wealth of books are available on parenting teens. Currently I'm reading "Parenting Today's Teenager Effectively: Hear Me, Hug Me, Trust Me" by Dr. G. Scott Wooding (Script Publishing Inc.). Based on input from teens themselves, Wooding offers 12 ingredients for effective parenting – understanding, communication, discipline, fairness, trust, respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, humor, spending time together and setting an example – devoting a chapter to each.

Secular parenting resources are easier to find than religion-based ones. But we need the latter as well, because raising kids with Christian values can be a daunting task in our secular culture, with its emphasis on looks, status, fame, consumerism, individualism, relativism, instant gratification and convenience. The challenge includes keeping our teens connected to the church. (As was the case when I was growing up, attending Sunday worship is non-negotiable in our household, and we go as a family. Our daughter is also involved in a junior youth group that includes socializing, Bible study and outreach activities.)

An online resource I've found quite valuable is www.christianity-today.com/parenting/features/teens.html. And recently I discovered a monthly Christian parenting magazine, Living with Teenagers, by LifeWay Press (www.lifeway.com). I just received the first issue (May 2004) of my subscription last week.

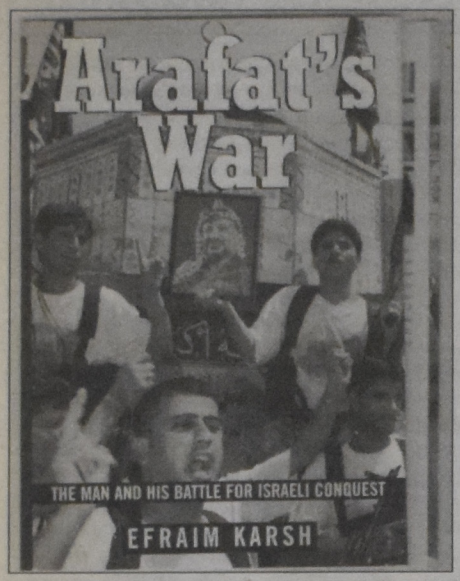
On the opening page, editor Sherrie Thomas stresses the importance of flexibility in applying parenting techniques and rules, in order to accommodate changes in our evolving teenagers as well as differences among them.

But there are two rules that always apply, she says. One is "love unconditionally" and ensure your teen experiences that love. The other is "parent from your knees," prayerfully seeking God's will and asking for wisdom.

Thankfully, we don't have to go it alone.

Review

Arafat: peacemaker or treacherous thug?



Arafat's War: The Man and his Battle for Israeli Conquest by Efraim Karsh, Grove Press, 296 pp. $ 37.50
Reviewed by Harry Antonides

Wherever Arafat goes, lawlessness, corruption, and instability follow.
(Abbas Zaki, PLO official, 2002)

The Jews are alone in the world. If Israel survives, it will be solely because of Jewish efforts. And Jewish resources.... I have a premonition that will not leave me; as it goes with Israel, so will it go with all of us. Should Israel perish the holocaust will be upon us.
(Eric Hoffer, 1968)

This is a riveting book, indispensable to all who are looking for insight into the labyrinthine politics of the Middle East, and the entire Arab world.

Efraim Karsh, a leading Middle East scholar, gives us a close-up view of one of the most intractable and murderous conflicts that casts an ominous shadow over the entire world. It has been said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is on the fault line of two clashing civilizations. As such it is a microcosm of the larger conflict between the Osama bin Laden kind of Islamism and the rest of the world.

A double life

Yasser Arafat is the one person who has dominated this conflict for more than four decades. Yet it would be hard to find anyone less suited for bringing about a peaceful solution to this conflict. How is it possible that this man succeeded in creating the impression that he was the right person for this gigantic task?

The answer is that Arafat lived a double life. He mastered the "art" of convincing the West that he was a peacemaker. However, his concept of peace is not the coexistence of two peoples, but as he told the Italian journalist Orianna Fallaci in 1972: "Peace for us is the destruction of Israel and nothing less."

Arafat's War takes a hard look at the life and politics of a man who fooled so many for so long. The picture that unfolds is not pretty. Efraim Karsh makes a compelling case that all the "peace" negotiations, including the Oslo accords, never had a chance of succeeding.

Arafat's lies start with his claim that he is a genuine Palestinian by birth, and that his family had to flee Jerusalem during the 1948 war. The reality is that he was born in Cairo in 1929, where he spent his early years and obtained his education. Apart from some brief stays with an uncle in Jerusalem, he did not live in Palestine before 1947, the date required to be listed as a Palestinian.

Arafat interrupted his studies to fight in the 1948 war against the newly founded state of Israel. He then resumed his university education in Cairo. In 1956 he worked briefly in Egypt and then operated his own contracting business in Kuwait. But much of his time as student in Egypt and a businessman in Kuwait was taken up with political activities. In 1958 he and his friends founded Al-Fatah, a secret network advocating armed struggle against Israel. In 1964 Arafat left Kuwait to devote himself full time to organize Fatah raids against Israel from Jordan

A culture of violence

Karsh explains that Arafat managed to play the role of indispensable leader in a culture of violence and treachery, "a place where the role of the absolute leader supersedes the role of political institutions, and where citizenship is largely synonymous with submission....The scale and the endemic nature of violence in the region are hard to exaggerate. In most Arab countries, political dissent is dealt with by repression, and ethnic and religious differences by internecine strife and murder."

An example of the convergence of the culture and the man is Arafat's first murder some time in 1949 or 1950. Arafat was part of what Karsh describes as a group of thugs who wanted to teach a lesson to a less militant faction of Palestinian fighters. The Arafat group received a beating. As they regrouped, they accused one of them, "Hamid," of having tipped off their rivals. He vehemently denied the accusation. During this interrogation, Arafat quietly got up and shot Hamid in the head.

It was later learned that the accusation against Hamid had been unfounded. But Arafat showed no remorse. Instead, he bragged that this was the first man he had personally killed and that therefore Hamid had served a valuable purpose in line with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood – an organization he had joined during his university days. A more chilling case of utter contempt even for the lives of his own men is hard to conceive. Karsh writes that for Arafat and his co-conspirators violence has assumed "mythic proportions."

Karsh's book opens with a revealing exchange in 1978 between the late Nicolae Ceausescu, the utterly corrupt and cruel president of Communist Romania, who was killed by his own people at the fall of Communism in 1989. Arafat had first met this Stalinist in the late 1960s, and they had become friends. This Pilate-and-Herod type "friendship" led to close cooperation between the Romanian intelligence services and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

It was Ceausescu who urged Arafat to feign the new role of peacemaker and pretend to break with terrorism. Arafat ever since has affected that role and played it so well that, mentored into his new persona by Moscow, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1994. (See Ion Mihai Pacepa, "The KGB's Man," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 2003. Pacepa was head of the Romanian Intelligence Service, until his defection in 1978.)

Two wars, in 1967 and in 1973, had ended in humiliating defeat for Israel's enemies. Arafat left no doubt that UN resolution 242, passed after the 1967 war, recognizing Israel's right to a secure existence and establishing the principle of "land for peace" was unacceptable. He responded to resolution 242 by saying that the Palestinians have had enough of UN resolutions and recommendations. He stated: "This is why our people have taken up arms and have come to realize that a revolutionary war of liberation is the only way to achieve their aims."

After the Six-day War of 1967, Jordan King Hussein allowed the PLO to use his country as a springboard for attacking Israel. But the King came to regret his hospitality after the PLO began to act as an occupying army, provoking violent clashes between the Palestinian guerillas and the Jordanian army and security forces. Only after fighting a bloody war in 1970, claiming thousands of lives, did the Jordanians succeed in getting rid of their murderous "guests."

It was the same ruinous story in Lebanon, the next base of Arafat and his thugs. The destruction of Lebanon, whose capital Beirut was once called the "Paris of the Middle East," is a story of heartbreaking devastation and chaos. In 1976 the Lebanese government asked for Syrian intervention, which in turn led to Israel's invasion in 1982 and the expulsion of Arafat and his followers, who then decamped to Tunisia.

Survival of the most ruthless

Unfortunately, that was not the end of this story. In the intervening years, as Karsh explains in great detail backed by careful research of the relevant documents, Arafat with his customary brazenness and cruelty, consolidated his leadership of the radical Palestinian movement. Elected chairman of the PLO's executive committee in 1969, he never veered from the position that negotiations were mere tactical maneuvers toward the long-term goal of the destruction of the state of Israel. While paying lip service to the cause of peace, and in violation of agreements he had made, he built up an extensive terrorist infrastructure.

In 1974, the UN allowed Arafat as the first non-state leader to address its General Assembly. Shortly thereafter, the UN accorded observer status to the PLO. Despite the recognition this status entailed, Palestinian terrorists launched a series of attacks on Israeli and Western targets.

A year later, the UN declared its first International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people and adopted a resolution equating Zionism with racism. The UN has consistently refused to condemn Palestinian terrorism, while eager to depict Israel as the stumbling bloc to peaceful relations in the Middle East.

What might have ended Arafat's career in 1990 was his siding with Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. But as he had often done before, he survived, and during the next decade, through Oslo One and Two negotiations, he remained the chief influence on the Palestinian side. He masterfully played on the desperate desire of the Israelis for peace. Four successive Israeli prime ministers, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, who served from 1992 till 2000, found out the hard way that Arafat was not really a peace partner at all.

Arafat walked away from an American-brokered peace plan in 2000 that conceded almost all of the Palestinian demands, to re-start yet another deadly campaign of suicide bombings in Israel. After more than forty years of Arafat's treachery that included masterminding terrorism on a large scale, ruthlessly eliminating all his colleagues who stood in his way, and breaking every promise he ever made, no one can any longer plead ignorance.

Not only are untold suffering and death inflicted on the Israelis, but the Palestinians, too, have been robbed of the opportunity to enjoy a measure of peace and freedom. When people are led to believe that they perform a good deed by blowing themselves up and killing innocent men, women and children, an unspeakable evil has been let loose in the land.

If Karsh's assessment is correct, and he makes a convincing case, would it not be appropriate to lay much of the blame for so many innocent deaths, Jewish as well as Palestinian, at the doorstep of those Western countries that have fallen for Arafat's murderous deception?

Harry Antonides
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Media/Sports

Media

...continued from p.11

hard to believe that the earliest witnesses, convinced that what they beheld in Jesus was nothing less than God-with-us, wouldn't have carefully preserved and nurtured and soon written down what he said and did. Not having ready access to books and computers, people in those times had memories that were much better trained to retain stories. Some Jewish children memorized entire books of the Old Testament.

Knowing, too, that their faith was rooted in historical events, the idea that a few short years after the events the conservators of that precious memory should be mixing in legends and myths and making up miracle stories about his childhood seems far-fetched. Many of the eye-witnesses were still alive. Wouldn't they have raised a stink? Even on a purely human level, the assumptions that these so-called experts work with do not strike me as credible. If the disciples had felt free to invent, surely they would have tried to make themselves look better than they do in the Gospels we now have.

I can't help but ask myself, What drives this horde of scholars to so cannibalize the Gospel corpus? Most are after a more authentic picture of Jesus, one not contaminated by the interpretation of the church. As soon as you take away the interpretation, however, you also scrub away the substance of the Spirit's testimony about Jesus' uniqueness. He is a walking, flesh-and-blood miracle, and if you erase everything about him that falls outside of what is historically and anthropologically probable, you end up with an illiterate, wandering Jew who told some interesting stories and may have made some exaggerated claims about himself that led to his crucifixion by the Romans. Later his over-imaginative followers inflated him to the level of God and subsequently managed to persuade millions and millions of gullible folk all around the world that their salvation comes through him.

Many of these scholars also seek to make the Christian faith less exclusive. If Jesus is indeed the divine Messiah, then salvation comes through faith in him alone. However, by the time the scholars are done, the Jesus they "discover" is a highly exceptional person whom we are urged to emulate. But how many human beings ever achieve the self-sacrificial love and wisdom that he exemplifies? Look around. Far fewer even than those who by faith accept the free grace offered by faith in him.

It is a sad spectacle to see the quest for the historical Jesus again and again become a flight from the historical and risen Jesus, the Lord of life. The speculations of the scholars bring to mind the saying, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.... Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."

Thank the Lord, there are still plenty of foolish biblical scholars who believe what they read. Maybe they don't get interviewed by the media very often, but they are far better mediums to the truth that sets us free and lights our path.

The Christian Reformed and American Reformed Churches form publishing partnership

Grand Rapids, Mich. (News release) – The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) are fast-tracking a partnership that will result in a single entity that will serve the publishing and distribution needs of both denominations.

The partnership is intended to make Faith Alive Christian Resources the primary resource provider for RCA and CRC churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition and beyond.

Under the new agreement, marketing, inventory, an on-line Internet store, customer service, order fulfillment, warehousing, distribution, and market research will all be housed at the CRC's offices in Grand Rapids, Mich., and the RCA will keep the TRAVARCA video-lending library.

The RCA and the CRC have been cooperating for years in things like curriculum development, children in worship, and worship resources

After the Buzzer
Tim Antonides

Somethin' to believe in

During the intermission before overtime in Game 6 of the Senators and Leafs series, I was watching as a CBC camera was panning the crowd. It stopped and focused on one fan holding a placard with one simple word: "BELIEVE."

I've seen this same one-word message in a number of playoff games in a number of sports. My first reaction on this occasion was to say to myself, "Yes, I believe that the Sens can pull it off." My second reaction was that I was a bit shocked at myself for believing and having faith in a sports team.

As a recent Canadian documentary suggested, sports arenas are our modern cathedrals. I myself have stood in awe and reverence at GM Place while the scoreboard showed images of historically great goals and motivational messages. I have leapt to my feet with 18,000 others after a great goal with a fervor that I wouldn't dream of showing in any Christian house of worship. All bets are off at the arena. Fanatical worship is appreciated and encouraged.

I'm hesitant to say that this sort of thing is all bad. True sports fever draws people together. It pulls a community tight in the pursuit of a difficult goal. The car flags and team jerseys you see all over town at playoff time are displayed in the anticipation of something great like Lord Stanley's Cup.

A few weeks ago, I stood in line for coffee at Tim Horton's and struck up a conversation with a guy about the previous night's hockey game. On most occasions, I wouldn't dream of initiating that sort of thing. But there was something about the cultural currency of playoff hockey that made me forget my introversion and talk to a total stranger.

I'm still kind of surprised at the kind of religious fanaticism that I feel at playoff time. In the playoffs, I want the Canucks to win at all costs. I can forgive a lot. I think back to all the games they've played over the season and everything I've invested into believing that they can go all the way. I yell and whine my way from one game to the next, yearning for greatness but trying to keep in the back of my mind that things will most likely end earlier than expected.

I think about what stops me from chasing after God and a Christ-like lifestyle in the same way as I worship my sports teams. Too often, being a Christian has become an obligation and a ritual. I know how I should act, but I'm bored by many of the Christian examples I see and dazzled by the lights and noise of modern houses of worship – like the hockey arena.

David experienced it all. He found extraordinary success and wealth. Most nights, he won the game. Yet the psalmist and king failed over and over again. He went for the pagan worship of the tangible rather than the pursuit of his Lord. Yet, he found victory and joy in the Lord he had so often ignored. I yearn to feel the kind of joy and awe he expresses in Psalm 68.

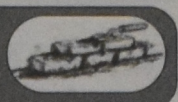
At the same time, I read the papers and listen to the sports commentators as they talk already about next year's hockey season. Maybe the Canucks will do it next year. Finally, everything will fall into place.

I'm prone to wander, likely to chase after the short-term tangible rather than the long-term spiritual. I hate that but I continue to fall prey to it. As a wanderer, though, I still know where home is.

Tim Antonides is back to teaching in Surrey, B.C. after spending a year in grad school.

Reflection

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



Remembering the Women

The following stories are taken from the book *Remembering the Women*. They serve as an example of scripture passages or stories that don't mention women by name. This reality makes it harder to fully understand the lives of women in biblical times.

The wife and daughters-in-law of Noah (Genesis 6:9; 7:24; 8:14-19)

These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation: Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

"Make yourself an ark of cypress wood, make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark is three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

"For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

"Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the group according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred fifty days.

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. Then God said to Noah, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh – birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth – so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

Four human couples took refuge in the ark and survived the flood. The wife and three daughters-in-law of Noah are significant figures in this story, but they are not named.

Women disciples and Mary (Acts 1:6 – 14)

When the apostles had come together to wait for the Holy Spirit, they asked Jesus, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore dominion to Israel?" Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

When Jesus had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "O Galileans, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

After Jesus' ascension, a group of believers, men and women, gather in the upper room to pray. The men are all identified by name, but the only woman named is Mary.

From: Henderson F. J. ed. (1999). *Remembering the Women*

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vickyv@telus.net

Singleness can be a hard, confusing road

Bob L. Friesen

Let's be honest: being single can be really tough. I was single until I was 31 years old. The single life felt like a long, hard road with no end.

Marriage can have its own peculiar difficulties; but I do believe singles today are having a rough time. Often, they are overlooked and misunderstood. Some people truly don't comprehend what singles are going through; many unmarried people feel they have to battle very painful emotions alone.

During my single days I longed to be married more than anything. I wanted to share my joys, my fears and my journey with a special, loving female. It seemed that no one really understood my heart's desire. I often heard people say, "Your time will come." Or I would get that old standby: "When you are least expecting it, Bob, then she will come into your life."

These people just didn't understand. How could I not long for or expect something so precious, which was everything my heart wanted? I got so may pat answers, and not enough empathy. I felt so misunderstood.

You would not enjoy reading my journals from those single days. I penned many words on the subject; they were very dark and dismal. I was beside myself with loneliness and pain. I often wondered if everyone thought I was becoming totally consumed by these emotions of longing.

Yet, I could not dismiss them – they were real, and very troubling. I could not erase my feelings. I wanted to be wed, and that was all there was to it. Yet I remained single. I eventually became convinced that I was doomed to be single forever.

It is imperative that you do not get the wrong message. I am not implying that to be single is a curse, or that there is anything wrong with staying unmarried. I am simply sharing my personal experience. I knew I did not want to be single. But it seemed that God was determined to keep me in that situation forever; I began to believe that he was punishing me, leaving me stuck indefinitely with intense longings that I would never be able to fulfill.

I felt abandoned by God.

Today, I am with a wonderful woman named Jolene. We have been married since August 21, 1999.

When I finally met her, I was in the best shape – emotionally and psychologically – that I had ever been in. Much healing had happened in my life. My journey as a single had been long, tiring and burdensome – but necessary. I know now that my many single days, as difficult as they had been, were an essential preparation for marriage.

Little did I know that the single life had been allowing me to work through some big issues, and getting me ready for a different set of challenges. God was sparing me from an early divorce, or a rocky marriage. I was being given the chance to sort through some struggles I was having with "commitment-phobia," co-dependency and intimacy.

I am convinced that, had I met Jolene earlier, it would not have been the right timing. I had too much on my plate to work through. When I finally met her, I was more ready than ever to engage in a committed, intimate relationship. Not all my troubles were resolved; and I still had other agendas to work through. But I was healthier; I was able to handle a deep and meaningful love relationship.

If anyone had told me, when I was single, that I was going to meet and marry someone like Jolene, I would have laughed sarcastically. Back then, things seemed so bleak; I often wondered why God had it in for me. Being single seemed like such a torture.

But on my wedding day, when I gave the groom's speech at the reception, I could honestly tell the guests: "This day came at the perfect time – not too early, nor too late!"

I don't know what all of God's plans are for Jolene and I. However, I do know that he brought us together at the best possible time. He knew exactly what he was doing. In the past, I often mistrusted him. I often reminded him to get on with the task of getting me 'hooked up.' I often demanded in anger: "Why are you allowing me to go through this ordeal?" I wept many times, pleading with God to answer me. He did – but just later than I wanted him to! As it turned out, his timing was right on target.

Do I now believe that getting married was the only thing which could have given me a happy life? No. Marriage is a blessing, and I would not trade it for anything else. But I do believe that, whatever one's situation is, God does indeed know what he is doing. He has good reasons for making some of us wait so long to get married. As scripture says, he has plans "to prosper us, not to harm us." He knows what timing is best for each of us. His timing often spares us from future pains we could never have foreseen.

Singleness can be a very depressing and confusing road. But it can also be a great road to maturity, growth and preparation for deeper relationships.

If God had let me wed when I originally wanted to, I might have wound up in a broken marriage. I thank him for having my best interests at heart.

Bob Friesen is advertising sales manager at BC Christian News. He and Jolene attend Northview Community Church in Abbotsford, B.C. They live in Langley with their dog Jireh.

On Location: Making Changes in the Global Village

Theresa Miedema

How does democracy work in the Global Village? In previous columns, I have suggested that consumers have "voting power" in the new world economy. Big Business answers to the bottom line, and we control the rise and fall of the bottom line through our purchases. Those who cry that Big Business has subverted democracy in our globalised society have forgotten that Big Business can do nothing without its key constituents, namely consumers like you and me.

One of the big risks that we now face in the Global Village is becoming the dupes of Big Business. We become dupes when we think that our purchases do not matter, that we do not have a real impact on how Big Business operates. We become dupes when we allow ourselves to be co-opted by Big Business into providing capital for its growth without demanding that Big Business be accountable for its policies and practices in return.

The true culprits

Understand this: globalization has not diminished democracy. We have. We allow the Global Village to become undemocratic by ignoring the very real power that we have as purchasers and by shirking our responsibilities as consumers. We need to understand the power that we have as the constituents of Big Business, and we need to understand how to exercise this power appropriately and effectively.

A good place to begin is to consider our priorities. When we exercise our power as consumers, we should be concerned about the people who are touched by the production and consumption cycle of the goods and services that Big Business offers to us. We ought to evaluate how our purchases will affect the workers who made the products we enjoy; the individuals who transported the goods to market; the store owner from whom we purchase our goods; the effect that the disposal of our product will have on the environment. We have a responsibility to safeguard the interests of these individuals and our environment.

Now this is a counter-cultural proposition. We live in the Age of the Sacred Individual, where the standard for evaluating any action is "My Best Interest." Our society counsels us to do what is best for us, as individuals. If it feels good, do it. If it works for you, do it.

This is not justice. This is not love for our neighbor. This does not glorify God. We who are citizens of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ live by another standard. Our standard is marked by justice, kindness, and service to God. We are called to exercise our powers as consumers in a stewardly way that promotes justice, protects the vulnerable around the world, and is environmentally-aware.

This means that we must consider whether child labor was used in the production of the goods that we consume, and whether workers were paid a fair wage for their efforts. We must evaluate how our purchases will affect the environment. Do we support companies that show blatant disregard for the well-being of their employees or use questionable marketing techniques? Are we consumers of goods that maximize personal convenience at the expense of the environment? The exercise of our powers as consumers should be marked with awareness, for we will be held accountable for our choices.

Counterproductive measures to social change

We must also be active citizens in the Global Village. We must work with Big Business rather than assume that Big Business is "the enemy". Corporations and industry associations are, in general, better placed than many governments to ensure that workers are treated fairly and that environmentally-friendly practices are adopted.

Placing the onus on governments of developing countries to protect workers and the environment can have at least three undesirable effects. First, the governments of many developing countries lack the resources to enforce labor codes and environmental regulation. Enforcing labor and environmental regulations divert scarce government resources away from other social welfare needs such as education, health care, and infrastructure like roads and water management.

Second, the enactment of extensive laws and regulations may drive companies away from countries, thereby depriving the population of those countries of the benefits of employment and other related economic gains. People that would otherwise have a job in a factory are left without a means of supporting themselves or are driven into less-than-desirable forms of supporting themselves, such as the sex trade.

Finally, extensive labor laws can actually result in lower wages. Under normal circumstances, companies pay employees a wage that is set by the local market for employment. After labour laws have been passed, companies have a choice: they can adhere to the legislation or they can maintain illegal employment practices. Adhering to legislation is usually more costly. Since there is generally a very large pool of workers willing to work under illegal conditions, many companies opt to assume the risk of violating labor laws.

Under these circumstances, companies pay workers less than the workers would receive if there were no laws since the companies must account for the fact that they may need to pay fines or bribes if their illegal practices are discovered. In the absence of labor legislation, companies would simply pay the going market rate for employment. After labor legislation has been passed, workers receive a discounted wage as a result of the margin created by the companies' risk of being caught in violation of this legislation.

In many developing countries, Big Business itself is the best channel through which to ensure that workers' rights are respected and that environmentally-friendly practices are adopted. A company is far more likely to adhere to employment standards that are developed internally, created by its head office or created by an industry association than standards that are locally legislated. Disregard of such standards could result in public censure or internal disciplinary measures.

The power of the buck

We are best able to use our power as consumers to protect vulnerable workers and the environment if we partner with Big Business. Our partnerships begin with communication. We need to tell Big Business that we are concerned about employee rights and environmental protection. By writing and emailing companies and by circulating and signing petitions, we can tell Big Business about what we, as consumers and their constituents, want to see reflected in their products and services.

Finally, we must follow through with our commitment to justice and to environmental stewardship. In addition to taking responsibility for the exercise of our power as consumers, to increasing our awareness of business practices, to communicating and advocating with Big Business, we must demonstrate that we will reward companies that reflect a real concern for their workers and the environment. This is where the buck stops, figuratively and literally.

Our power as consumers is at its apex when we are making purchases. We make changes in the Global Village by making purchases that support companies with ethical, just and environmentally-sound policies and practices. When our support or our rejection is accompanied by letters or emails to companies that explain why we have made certain purchasing decisions, we send a clear message about our priorities. Big Business will not disregard these messages. It cannot afford to disregard what its consumers and its constituents want.

Suddenly, shopping seems like much more of a chore than it used to be. Exercising our power as consumers takes time, commitment, and likely more of our hard-earned dollars. It is generally more expensive to produce goods and services in a way that protects workers and the environment. But change in the Global Village is not easy and justice is never cheap. This is important to remember as we go forward to practice democracy in the Global Village.

Opinion

Yes .... but

Bert Hielema

Bush and Iraq; pirate treasure and oil

A few weeks ago Bush had a rare press conference. I closely followed his 17 minute speech and the ensuing question period. To me, he spoke so convincingly that I must apologize: in my previous column I wrote that Bush was 'drilled' to repeat the words "freedom and democracy." Listening to him, I now am convinced that these are his own ideas.

Three things struck me. One, that Bush is completely sincere. Two, he is motivated by religion. Before signing off, Bush said: "Freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world." He reiterated that his mission is dictated from above, reminding me of Charlemagne, Charles the Great, who in the Ninth century, as King of the Franks, brought Christian culture to the rest of Europe by force. Except that history will not describe Bush Jr. as 'Bush the Great.'

"As the greatest power on the face of the Earth, we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom."

It seems to me that the real 'message' the rulers of the most Christian country in the world bring is that 'freedom' means freedom to pollute (America is the biggest per capita polluter) and freedom to invade sovereign countries without a valid reason.

The Iraq Decade

Bush never used the word "crusade," which touched off a firestorm of criticism in the Muslim world when he uttered it soon after Sept. 11, 2001. But that is what, in essence, is happening. At this time US marines are surrounding a cleric in the holy city of Najaf, reinforcing the impression that the USA is fighting a holy war.

Bush backing Sharon's proposal to abandon Gaza but retain the settlements on the West Bank, may also cater to the Christian, Jewish and Islam extremists.

My third point. Bush spoke the truth when he said, "We're changing the world." It takes a few years for a decade to define itself. I think it will be known as the 'Iraq decade', because this world-changing invasion into the Middle East will define the 'whatever you call the first 10 years of a new century.' Come June 30, Iraq will become the world's problem, when a power transfer takes place as the next step toward democracy and freedom.

Freedom and democracy are not just words, they are concepts inculcated in peoples' behavior over generations. They stem from general wisdom and centuries of committed community living, a wholesome give-and-take and compromise, rooted in the religious theme of 'loving your neighbor as yourself.' Blame Saddam, corruption, cynicism, apathy, tribal and religious division for Iraq to be damaged goods, perhaps irreparable, ready not for democracy but ripe for anarchy.

Bush's current rationale that the primary purpose of the invasion was to bring democracy and freedom to Iraq is hogwash, something that will make little sense to the American public. If this is so important in Iraq, why not Cuba, next door, or Egypt or Pakistan – both ruled by dictators – buddies of Bush – or Iran, or North Korea or Saudi Arabia, Russia, Zimbabwe, just to name the most obvious.

Bad start

It could be that Iraq will define not only the decade but set the tone for the century as well. There is no doubt that the new millennium is off to a bad start. Global warming, pandemics in humans and animals, disastrous loss of species, moral chaos and the pending oil peak threatening mass starvation: our follies are firing back on us. Iraq is part of that foolish pattern.

It now has become a World-class problem with the involvement of the United Nations. First scorned and ridiculed as ineffective and bureaucratic by Bush, suddenly, because his approach has failed, the UN must step in. Kofi Annan – like the Pope – commands no divisions, has no money, no binding law structure. Everything done by the UN depends on the good will of its member nations, most of them poor and powerless. Basically nothing will change. The USA will have to contribute the lion's share in troops and funds for years to come, necessitating tax increases.

Recent history tells us that Oil and Peace don't mix. Look at Sudan, where oil has been at the centre of the 20-year conflict, or Colombia or Nigeria or Angola or the Congo – all mineral and oil-rich and torn by strife. Iraq will prove no exception. Mix in religion and the potential for total disaster is a given. Look what one speech can do to a critical fellow such as I am.

Oil and Peace

Oil and Peace will diverge even more in the coming years. Shell-shock today is not confined to soldiers in battle. It's also something the world suffered when Shell Oil revealed that it had overstated its reserves by some 22 percent. Oil companies are valued by what they have estimated is their future crude oil supplies, somewhere deep down in the earth. Tim Hearn, chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Imperial Oil, made a shocking statement a week or so ago: "Half of the oil and gas that will be needed 10 years from now will have to come from fields not currently in production."

Given that the world now uses 80 million barrels per day (bpd) which in 10 years will have grown to 98 million bpd, this means that 49 million barrels per day will have to be discovered between now and the year 2014.

Intelligence is needed here to interpret the true meaning of his words. The word 'intelligence' comes from the Latin 'interlegere' meaning reading between the lines. So what he really said was that unless with our most up-to-date detection equipment we discover another Middle East of oil soon, we are going to run out of the stuff in the next decade.

Pirate treasure

What sort of an analogy can I use to illustrate our situation? Let me try. You are a pirate and have gathered, in a life time of sailing the seven seas, a huge treasure and are transporting your hoard, estimated at some 1000 gold pieces, on a treacherous river when suddenly your boat springs a leak. You manage to beach the vessel and retrieve half of your treasure right away, but the rest is swept into the raging waters.

You know that it's out there somewhere. That is your 'reserve.' Since you have enough to live a life of luxury, you're in no hurry to find that sunken part. But, all good things end sometime – you've been living like a king with a lifestyle that depends on spending that golden capital – and seeing the bottom of your treasure chest, you start searching for your 'reserve.'

That's not as easy as you thought. You find a coin here and there, and you conclude that the swift current has swept some away, that some have fallen into crags, or under rocks where nobody will find them. Perhaps the odd fish has swallowed a glittering money piece, and, who knows, some lucky fisherman will strike gold in an unexpected way. That reserve is no longer the money in the bank you thought it to be.

We, as a society, are at that crucial point. Where is that black gold? Our lifestyle demands that we must find more and more of our black gold, but we don't know where to go.

Enter Mr. Matt Simmons, an expert in 'oil reserves.' On April 14 he talked about this in Houston Texas, his home town. His illustrated power-point lecture is available on his website, under the heading of "Reserve Reporting." With the help of 48 slides he illustrates that the entire oil system, company-by-company, basin-by-basin, country-by country, has fuzzy proved reserves.

While oil demand is on the rise – 2 percent per year – many current oil producers are now in irreversible decline. He emphasizes that oil demand can never exceed oil supply. One percent overproduction generates a glut. One percent shortage means chaos. We are at that point where chaos knocks at our door.

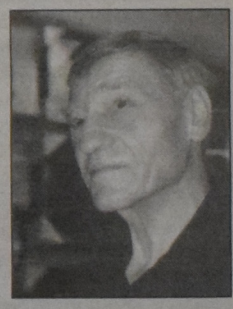
According to Mr Simmons, a close friend of Vice President Cheney and President Bush, we – the financial markets and the global economy – are now flying blind, because most of the world's proven reserves are simply statements. They mean nothing. There is no body which issues 'reserve verification' certificates.

What we do know is that the easy finds are pumped out, and locating and developing new fields are going to be double and triple the cost. Mr Simmons concludes that the world needs to be extremely alarmed. No reliable data was fine when the world had massive cushions, young giant oilfields, 90 to 100 days oil stocks and excessive capacity, meaning that we could shut off the pumps for a while and still manage. All this luxury has evaporated.

So, when Mr Hearn of Imperial Oil tells us that half of what we burn every day will soon have to come from 'as yet to discovered oil,' he, in essence is saying, the same as Mr Simmons, whose bank finances the oil industry: the price of oil and gas and propane and food and any plastic product will go through the roof.

We now hear that warnings about 9/11 were largely ignored, at the expense of some 3000 lives. When the oil-shortage strikes and costs skyrocket, the number of victims will be infinitely greater. Will these warnings also be ignored?

Believe me, I really do try to find some good news somewhere in the many readings I do. Today – again – I am inclined to curse myself for writing such an alarming column. But then the best way to deal with danger is to look it in the eye and recognize it. With an election coming, ask your candidate about this. Just in case, we all, without exception, must start to conserve and do with less: the longer we can delay the 'turning point' the better.



Bert Hielema's website has been updated, now including all past columns as well as other writings: www.geocities.com/hielemab

Events

70TH ANNIVERSARY
SARNIA FIRST CRC
May 15 dinner at 5:30 p.m.
(reservation needed)
7 p.m. program -Sarnia Chr. Sch.
May 16: Celebratory Anniversary Worship Service
Contact firstcrc@xcelco.on.ca or call **519-336-8808**

HERITAGE SERVICE, June 27
Zion CRC, 409 Adelaide Ave. E. (at Central Park), Oshawa.
Rev. John Veenstra, preaching.
A Social hour will follow the service.

Events/Advertising

Attention University and High School Students!
Don't let the cold weather fool you...summer is just around the corner!

St. Catharines – The Summer Work – Student Exchange Program is gearing up for another exciting summer and together with the support of your local riding Member of Parliament this summer is sure to be a success.

The Summer Work-Student Exchange is a program of the Canadian Unity Council that provides 1,200 high school students from across Canada the opportunity to travel to another province for six weeks during the summer in order to gain valuable work experience, learn about another culture and improve their second language.

During the exchange, students aged 16 and 17 will travel to a francophone community where they will live with a host family. The Summer Work-Student Exchange Program runs from July 5th to August 13th, 2004. There is no cost to participants since the program is federally funded.

"The program is beneficial since students are experiencing another culture, challenge of making new friends, improving their second language and participating in new activities that are planned each weekend" says Burgess of the benefits of the program.

Nancy Burgess welcomes all students aged 16 and 17 to obtain more information and apply online at www.summer-work.com

For more information contact: Nancy Burgess Coordinator- St. Catharines Summer Work Student Exchange Tel: 905-685-5203 Pager: 905-322-7593 Email: nburgess@cogeco.ca

THE MAYFLOWER

Christian Mixed Choir from the Netherlands

Andre van Vliet - Director
Jimco Zijlstra - Organist
Jan Lenselink - Pianist

SATURDAY MAY 22 - 2004
Mountainview Christian Reformed Church
290 Main St. E - **Grimsby**, Ontario
(Tickets for this concert only are available at the DUTCH SHOP on Main St. in Grimsby or at the door. Tickets are $10 per person or $25 per family - 2 adults/ 2children) For info call 905.308.0853

MONDAY MAY 24 - 2004
Chalmers United Church - 8:00 PM
15 Van Sittart Av. - **Woodstock**, Ontario

WEDNESDAY MAY 26 -2004
St. George's Anglican Church - 8:00 PM
99 Woolwich St - **Guelph**, Ontario

THURSDAY MAY 17 - 2004
Redeemer University College - 8:00 PM
777 Garner Rd E. - **Ancaster**, Ontario
Participating will be the Mattaniah Male Choir with director Herman den Hollander and organist Andre Knevel.

Tickets for Woodstock, Guelph and Ancaster are $10 per person or $6 for 18 & under.
For information or tickets call John at 905.648.3170 or via email: john_vdl@hotmail.com.

This is an evening you don't want to miss!
Anthems by the 112 voices ofthe choir, familiar Songs of Faith, Negro Spirituals as well asbeautiful organ and piano solo's.
Also joining the choir will be Soprano Karen Postmus.

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Call: 416-461-1207
Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
Fax: 416-465-6367

With gratitude to God,
First Christian Reformed Church
of **Hamilton, Ontario**
will celebrate its 75th Anniversary in a service of praise and thanksgiving, on Sunday, **May 30, 2004.**
Former pastor Andrew Kuyvenhoven will preach.

The congregation welcomes all friends and former members to the service and a celebration reception following.
For more information, call
905-528-3826
or visit the church website at
http://firsthamilton.ca/.

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Fax: 519-576-0471
E-mail: rijk@rhaalboomqc.ca

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Classifieds

Personal

A widow in her late 60's would like to meet a sincere Christian man. Reply to: Christian Courier **File #2740** 1 Hiscott St, St Catharines ON L2R 1C7

Births

Paul & Linda **Stadt** joyfully announce the arrival of their first grandchildren.

William Paul
was born on January 19th to
Andrea & Brian **Draijer**, *Waterloo, ON*

Calvin James
was born on April 20th to
Sara & Jim **Boss**, *Frankfort, Illinois.*

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord." Ps. 78:4

Birthday

1914 May 8 2004

"Praise the Lord"

Sybrand Koole

Happy 90th Birthday Father/Opa

from your children & childrens' children.
Joe & Joan Koole, *Toronto*
Jani & Andy teNyenhuis, *Oro Station*
John & Juanita Koole, *Shanty Bay*
Cor & Diane, *Chatham*
Dora & Nick, *Thornton*
Marg & Larry Williamson, *Kitchener*
and 17 grandchildren
and 16 great-grandchildren

Home: P 502 – 7900 McLaughlin Rd S
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7
Unit P-502; 905-454-1915

Anniversaries

"I will guide thee with mine eye." Psalm 32:8c

With praise and thanksgiving
the children and grandchildren of

IKE AND NELLIE CAHAIS (nee Heeringa)

are pleased to announce the celebration of their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on June 12, 2004.

Thank you mom and dad for the years of love and commitment that you have given to us. We wish you many more happy years together. Much love from:

Case & Sherry – Joshua, Jordan, Ashley, Marley, *Vancouver*
Teresa & Rob – Michael, David, Matthew, *Toronto*
Andrew & Cheryl, *Vancouver*
Yvonne & Jim – Joey, Daniel, *Ponty Pool*

Ike & Nellie's address: 862 Sheppard Ave, Pickering ON L1V 5H4

1954 May 20 2004

"The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not be in want." Psalm 23:1

With thanksgiving to the Lord
for his abundant faithfulness,
we rejoice and celebrate the
50th Wedding Anniversary
of our dear parents and grandparents

HANK AND RIEK POSTMA
(nee Luymes)

Congratulations and Love from:
Evert Postma, *Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON*
John & Janet Postma, *Bear River, NS*
Sarin, Chelsae
Hank & Annette Postma, *Niagara-on-the-Lake*
Jason, Kristen, Eric
Joanne & John Vink, *St. Catharines, ON*
Brenda, Cheryl
Freda & John Prins, *West Lincoln, ON*
Christopher, Steven, Lindsy
Aubrey & Heather Postma, *Abbotsford BC*
Aaron, Tyler

An **Open House** will be held on Saturday May 22, 2004 from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. at Covenant Christian Reformed Church, 278 Parnell Road, St. Catharines, ON
Best wishes only.

Home address: 1513 – Concession 6
RR#2, Niagara-on-the-Lake ON L0S 1J0

1954 June 3 2004
Rudyard Michigan Waterdown Ontario

We give thanks and rejoice with our parents & grandparents

ARIE AND ELLEN VAN EEK (nee Ploegstra)

on the occasion of their **50th Wedding Anniversary.**
May the light of God's grace
continue to shine on you and through you.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15b

With love from your children and grandchildren:
Calvin & Gloria Van Eek – Andrew, Helena, Ellen, *Kitchener, ON*
Jane & George Nieuwenhuis – Daniel, Ruth, Esther, Lisa, *Calgary, AB*
Esther Van Eek & Simon du Toit – Katherine, Nicholas, *Silver Springs, MD*
Shirlene & Mike Abma – Annalise, Aaron, Lydia, *Grand Rapids, MI*
John & Julie Van Eek – Rebecca, Hannah, *Abbotsford, BC*

Open House on May 29, 3 - 5 p.m. at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, 606 Dundas St. E., Waterdown
Best wishes only.

Home address: 23 Niska Dr, Waterdown ON L0R 2H3

Norg – May 19, 1949 – Wieringermeer

The wedding text was Proverbs 16:9. "In his heart a man plans his course but the Lord determines his steps."

Praise the Lord who has given the joy of many blessed years of marriage to

JIM AND ROELY AUKEMA

and the family is happy to announce their **55th Anniversary.**

Their thankful children:
Floris & Shurley Aukema, *Brampton*
Ralph & Cynthia Aukema, *Chatham*
Trudy & Peter Schipper, *Grimsby*
Helena Aukema, *Douglas, Michigan*
Edward Aukema, *Chatham*
Rita & Bob Vriesema, *Dresden*

Address: 40 Elm St Apt 105
Chatham ON N7M 6A5

1954, Groningen May 21 Wasaga Beach, 2004

With praise and thanksgiving to God we joyfully announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

HARRY AND MINY DEVRIES (nee deVries)

May the Lord continue to bless you richly as you continue to be a blessing to us.
With love and congratulations from:
Henry & Karen deVries – Terrance, Danielle, Sarah, *Guelph, ON*
Charles & Arlene deVries – Mark, Charlene, Steven, *Duncan, BC*
Wilma & Ed Klapwyk – Jamie, Lisa, Jennifer, *Fergus, ON*

Home address: 51 Timberland Cres, Wasaga Beach ON L0L 2P0

In thankfulness to the Lord we wish to invite you to celebrate with us the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

TOM AND RIET SCHENK (Struijk)

at an
Open House
Saturday
May 22, 2004,
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
at Georgetown Christian Reformed Church
11611 Trafalgar Rd.

From their loving family

Tom and Riet's address:
79 Charles Street
Georgetown ON L7G 2Z6

Garijp Friesland 1939 — Grimsby Ontario 2004

With thankfulness to God for the gift of life and love and his faithfulness in their lives, we hope to celebrate the **65th Wedding Anniversary** of our dear parents and Pake and Beppe on May 25, 2004.

JACOB AND RENNY DE VRIES (nee Rooda)

Congratulations and love from your children:

Anne & Joop Oudshoorn, *St.Catharines*
Bill & Sylvia de Vries, *St.Catharines*
Klara & Ralph Numan, *St.Catharines*
Jack & Henny de Vries, *St.Catharines*
Dee & Evert Langendoen, *St.Catharines*
Greta & Jan Haanstra, *Erin*
Eric & Lynd de Vries, *Welland*
Emmy & Mike Perry, *St.Ann's*

Congratulations also from 27 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: Shalom Manor, 12 Barlett Ave Rm. 228, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3

The children and grandchildren of

HARRY AND MARIA LINKER

are grateful to the Lord that we can celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary.**

We hope to celebrate this joyful occasion on Sat. May 15th with an **Open House** from 2 - 4 p.m. at Providence United Reformed Church, 447 Second St, Strathroy ON (south of Hwy. 402).
Best wishes only, please.

Home address: 373 Peach St.
Strathroy ON N7G 1Z9

1954 April 19 2004
1 Corinthians 3:16,17

WIEBRAND AND JANTJE VANHUIZEN (VanDijk)

With thankfulness to God, we recently celebrated the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents. We pray that God may continue to be with them.

John & Beverley vanHuizen, *Essex, ON*
Samuel, Katelynn, Benjamin
Harvey & Jacqueline vanHuizen, *Essex, ON*
Ryan, Lauren, Alexandra, Hayley
Hilda & John Olbach, *St. Marys, ON*
Henry, Eric, Luke, Simon, Christopher

Home Address: 10 – 209 Irwin Ave
Essex ON N8M 2T5

Classifieds

Obituaries

Lollum, FR — Chatham, ON
Sept 127, 1921 — April 13, 2004

Psalm 121

On April 13, 2004 at the age of 82 our dear mother

JETSKE (Jean) VANDER SLUIS
(nee Reinsma)

entered her eternal rest. Predeceased by her husband Klaas, 1977.

She will be truly missed by her children

Ray & Theresa Vander Sluis
Steve & Hessy Byma
Donald & Maggie Vander Sluis
Mike & Kathy Vander Sluis
Ken & Ellen Vander Sluis
(all of Chatham ON)

Loving Grandmother of:
18 grandchildren & 7 great-grandchildren

Funeral Service was held at Grace Christian Reformed Church, Chatham Ont. on April 15, 2004 with Rev. R. Koops officiating.

Correspondence: R. & T. Vander Sluis
124 Indian Creek Rd E
Chatham ON N7M 5J6
Ph 519-351-1478

Amsterdam, The Neth. — St. Thomas, Ontario
March 5, 1918 — April 2, 2004

"He leadeth me beside still waters."
Psalm 23:2b

In his infinite wisdom
the Lord took to his eternal home

HERMAN PIETERS

Dearly loved husband for 52 years of
Anna J. G. (Hildering) Pieters
Loving father of Randy & Melody Pieters
Marianne Pieters

Treasured grandpa & great-grandpa of
Carey Pieters
Lauralee & Peter Van Doodewaard
(Emma, Charity, Susanna)
Gary Pieters

Fondly remembered by brothers- and sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews and family in Ontario and Holland.

Funeral service was held at the First Christian Reformed Church, St.Thomas by Pastor Mike Wagenman, on Tuesday, April 6th, 2004 at 1 p.m.

Home Address: Mrs. A. Pieters
292 Forest Ave
St.Thomas ON N5R 2K4

HARMEN FABER

Suddenly on April 19, 2004 Harmen passed away at the age of 74.

Harmen leaves to cherish his memory his wife of 47 years, Frances, sons: Rodger (Regina), Kenneth (Tara), and Bruce, and daughter-in-law Janice, and eight grandchildren: Lauren, Daniel, Rachel, Kevin, Krista, Isaac, Joel and Emily. He also leaves brothers Jack (Eileen) and Saake and sisters Pietje and Epie. Harmen was predeceased by his parents and his son, Greg. He will be sadly missed by his family and friends.

Harmen was born in Friesland, Holland and left home as a young man to serve as aircraft mechanic with the Dutch Navy. He immigrated to Canada in 1956 and settled in Winnipeg. He worked as a Millwright with Transport Canada and later with Agriculture Canada before retiring in 1991.

Harmen was an active member of the Covenant Christian Reformed Church often serving in the church council. He was a founding member of Calvin Christian School and served the school in many capacities including chairman of the school board. He was also a regular Blood Donor.

Dad was a skilled craftsman and could build or fix anything from houses to cars. He loved working with his hands and designing plans for projects, none were too big or too small. He proudly shared his expertise with his sons.

Through his life and upon retirement Harmen traveled extensively throughout Canada, Africa and Europe, but his favorite destinations were the homes of his grandchildren.

Memorial Service was held on Friday, April 23, 2004 at 2:00 p.m. at Covenant Christian Reformed Church, 653 Knowles Ave. with Rev. Bill Tuininga officiating.

Donations may be made to the Heart & Stroke Foundation, 6 Donald St, Winnipeg MB R3L 0K6 or Calvin Christian School, 245 Sutton Ave, Wpg MB R2G 0T1

Correspondence address: F. Faber, 334 McLeod Ave, Winnipeg NB R2K 0A9

"He who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward." Prov. 11:18

Classified Rates

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: *Christian Courier* is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.
RATES (GST added to all rates listed): All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2 " wide) **rose@christiancourier.ca**
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We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in Christian Courier and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.
SUBMITTING YOUR AD: fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above
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A dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr Ref church Sunday **May 30** at 3 pm. Rev. Vander Plaat preaching.

For Sale

Senior's Apartment at Shalom Evergreen Terrace, 275 Main St E, Grimsby, Suite 314. Size: 870 sq, ft, 1 bedroom, 10'x 4 1/2' Solarium Large bathroom, Central Air, excellent view. Complete with washer, drier, dishwasher, stove, fridge, microwave, all just over a year old. Asking $139,600.00 firm.
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Seeking Employment

Redeemer Univ. Graduate (2004) **Business Major** seeks challenging employment opportunity in the Hamilton, Toronto, St Catharine's area.
Can be contacted at **519 677 4073**, Fax 519 627 3552, ask for Michael.

See page 21 for job opportunities.

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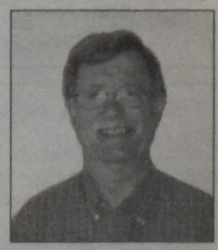

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Advertising

Job Opportunities

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John Van Loenen 905-936-2550
chair of council, or
Aris DeBruin 705-435-5317
Chair of the Calling Committee

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For more information on our Schools, or to view the Role Description, visit our web-site:
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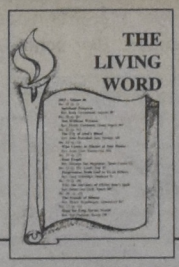

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

May 10 Hollandse Dag First CRC, Kingston, ON Spreker Rev. Jacob Kuntz. " Samen met alle heiligen " For more Info call (613)546-5615

May 12 **50th anniversary** of the Bowmanville, Ottawa, & Quinte Region **Lady's Society**. Convention at Day's Inn, 33 Benson St, **Kingston,** ON. See ad this page for details.

May 14-16 **Immanuel Christian School**, **50th** anniversary, 15 Caverly Rd, **Aylmer**, Ont. See ad this issue or website: www.amtelecom.net/~immanuel/ics.html

May 15 Retirement **Open House** for Albert **Dreise** from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., at Calvary CRC, Hwy #8 & Middletown Rd. **West Flamborough**

May 15,16 **Sarnia** First Christian Reformed Church, **70th Anniversary**. Contact firstcrc@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808.

May 18 National organ competition winner **Jonathan Oldengarm** plays monumental works of the French romantics on the great Casavant organ at St. Mary's Basilica, Spring Garden Road at Barrington Street, **Halifax,** NS, 8:00 pm. For tickets and information, call the St. Cecilia Concert Series Box Office at 902-420-4085, or visit www.stcecilia.ca.

May 24 Hollandse Dag First CRC, Kingston, ON Spreker Rev. Jacob Kuntz. " Samen met alle heiligen " For more Info call (613)546-5615

May 29 First Christian Reformed Church of **Montreal** will celebrate its **50th anniversary**. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca

May 30 First Christian Reformed Church of **Hamilton,** Ontario will celebrate its 75th Anniversary in a service of praise and thanksgiving. See ad on page 19.

May 30 A dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr Ref church Sunday at 3 pm. Rev Vander Plaat preaching

June 6 Hollandse Dag First CRC, Kingston, ON Spreker Rev. Jacob Kuntz. " Samen met alle heiligen " For more Info call (613)546-5615

June 9 Hollandse Dag 10 a.m. at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. See ad this issue.

June 26, 27 Fellowship CRC in **Brighton**, Ont. will be celebrating 25 years of God's faithfulness. A special service will be held on Sunday. For more information please call 613 475-3836

June 27 Heritage Service, Zion CRC, 409 Adelaide Ave. E. (at Central Park), **Oshawa**. Rev. John Veenstra, "De hemelvaart van Christus." A Social hour will follow the service.

DE VYF EN DERTIGSTE (35)

HOLLANDSE DAG

WORD GEHOUDEN D.V.
WOENSDAG 9 JUNI 2004, OM 10 UUR
IN DE MOOREFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER.

SAMENZANG, VOORDRACHTEN,
MUZIEK o/a "ZINGENDE SYSJES"

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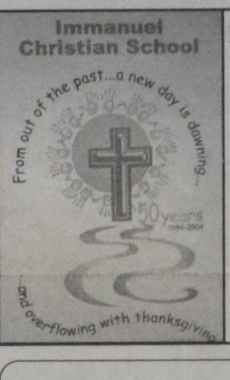
Voor nadere informatie telefoneer:
Hilbert Rumph, Drayton ON
tel. 519-638-2053

Christian Courier apologizes for errors in this ad in Apr. 26 issue.



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of Christian Education in Aylmer.
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For further information: ph: *519-773-8476*
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TICO Registration #4499356

You are invited
to an evening of celebration in honour of
Hank Vandezande
who is retiring after many years of dedicated and faithful service in Christian education.
Please join us on
Friday, May 28, 2004
7:30 p.m. – Open House
8:00 p.m. – Program
at
London District Christian Secondary School
24 Braesyde Avenue, London, ON N5W 1V3
Best wishes may be sent to **office@ldcss.on.ca**

For issue dates, deadlines, and community events, visit our website at **www.christiancourier.ca**

FELLOWSHIP CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN BRIGHTON, ONTARIO
will be celebrating **25 years** of God's faithfulness on **June 26 & 27**, 2004. A special service will be held on Sunday.
For more information please call **613-475-3836**. Visit our website at:
http://brightoncrc.org/index.html

Welkom
Hollandse Dag
May 10, 24 and June 6th 2004.
First Christian Reformed Church, **Kingston**, ON
Spreker
Rev. Jacob Kuntz.
"Samen met alle heiligen"
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News

Ontario's musical Easter Pageant

Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema

Several months after Easter each year since 1995, 150 actors and actresses have performed *The Promise: a Musical Pageant on the Life of Christ* at the Forest Amphitheatre, located at the Esli Dodge Conservation Area near Forest, Ontario.

According to Syd Fletcher, a retired school principal and director of the pageant, the Forest Amphitheatre evolved in the mid-1990s. On July 1, 1992 he had come to the conservation area to participate in a concert with the Forest Excelsior Band. "We were situated at the top of the hill out of sight of the spectators and we could hardly be heard," he recalls.

The next year when he visited the island where the present stage now is, he realized that it would be an excellent performance location for the band. He asked the Town of Forest to build a stage there, and they erected a cement pad, 40 feet by 40 feet, and an 8 foot canvas backdrop.

After Fletcher and his wife, Jane, realized the conservation area's setting was a natural amphitheatre with remarkable acoustics, they searched for a play that could be performed there. They chose *The Promise*, written by Jan Dargatz and Gary Rhodes. It was first dramatized by a professional theatre group in Glen Rose, Texas in 1989. By 2000 over five million people had viewed it there, Fletcher says.

The Promise and the actuality

The Promise is a two hour performance which incorporates several Dove Award-winning songs, and begins "as a present-day grandfather strolls with his grandchildren along the side of the water at the foot of the amphitheatre, according to The Forest Community Theatre's website (www.forest-communitytheatre.com). As he talks to them about the wonders of the past, night falls and the children beg him to repeat the story of Jesus.... The three are swept into the actual events of Christ's life and ministry."

Preparing for the first year's performance was scary, Fletcher recalls. "Two weeks before, we were on the island for a major rehearsal. A cold, howling wind was coming down the valley and we were fighting with faulty microphones. I still had only seven disciples. My wife said to me, 'We'll be lucky to have 200 people on the hill to see this.'" But despite obstacles, over 50,000 people have since viewed the drama.

From all walks of life and all denominations

Improvements have been made to the stage area since the initial cement pad was erected, including a 60 foot wide by 12 foot high backdrop, a secondary 40 foot wide stage, and a sound and lighting room for the computerized sound and lighting system, made up of five kilometres of cables, 50 lights, and numerous microphones and speakers.

Most of the actors and actresses, all volunteers, return each year. As a result, ten choir practices, which include six major rehearsals at the site two weeks before the performances, are sufficient to prepare for the production. "This is far different from the first couple of years when we had many practices leading up to the first performance," Fletcher says.

The volunteers come from all walks of life – an elementary school principal, a retired railroad conductor, a seamstress, and a farmer, to name a few – and from many denominations. On the website Don Kobe, who plays the roles of Prophet, Satan, and Judas, is quoted as saying, "One of the neatest things about *The Promise* is that you are working side by side with people of all denominations." Initially some volunteers had no previous stage experience, such as Steve Stellingwerf who plays the role of Jesus. A wide range of age groups is represented, including children who attend sheep, play leading roles, work behind the scenes, dance, or participate in crowd scenes.

The Promise is financed by ticket sales. Last year 3000 people attended six performances despite adverse weather conditions all around the conservation area, says Fletcher. "Our break-even point is about 3500 people so we are hoping for better weather this year."

Caught up in the action

Fletcher claims the production of *The Promise* is totally absorbing and has had a spiritual impact on viewers. "When the opening music starts and 150 people come over the top of the amphitheatre hill welcoming the audience to Jerusalem, the spectators find themselves caught up in the action," he relates enthusiastically.

Sometimes viewers talk to Fletcher after performances and tell him about the impact the drama has had on them. "A man came to see me and said, 'You don't know me, but I wanted to tell you something. My son came with me tonight, although he didn't want to. At the end of the first act, he said to me, "Dad, I know that we haven't been getting along, but I want to tell you that I want to make a clean start with my life."'

Performances this year will take place on July 2-4 and 11-13 at 8:30 p.m. Visitors are asked to bring their own lawn chairs or blankets. Wheelchair accessible seating is available at the centre of the top of the hill. In case of inclement weather, the show may be delayed if the bad weather seems temporary, or canceled. Though no refunds will be given, rain checks will be issued for future performances. Fletcher notes that the pageant has only been rained out once.

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